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American Dramatists Series

TRIAL MARRIAGE

A SATIRIC COMEDY
IN THREE ACTS

BY

HARRIET HOLMES HASLETT
Author of "Jack's Bluff," "Dolores of the Sierra and Other One-Act Plays," "The Temptation of Anne O'Brien" and "Impulses"

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To

J. W. H. AND R. H. H.

OR ANY OTHER COUPLE WITH A SENSE OF HUMOR

PREFACE

Various well-known persons have given forth epigrams on the subject of the stage, ranging all the way from Euripides to Brander Matthews. These are chiefly concerned with the theater and the actor. Few have mentioned the dramatist, yet back of all the author stands, armed with his or her own beliefs and standards.

Personally I believe with Mazzini that the drama is the meeting place of art and life.

Among the several forms of drama the satiric is the least understood. Just why this is so I know of no one who has vouchsafed an opinion. It must be because human beings hate ridicule directed against themselves.

According to the laws which should govern true satire the satirist must be well grounded in his subject before he presumes to ridicule. Then, wherever they will, even into his own soul, his satiric darts will fly, carrying inevitable truth on their wings.

This comedy is hyphenated with satire as will be perceived. In the guise of lightness I have endeavored to present some of the realities, which during this unusually restless period are apparent in our everyday life. It may help us to live, not with the "Professor" who vainly glimpses "fifty

years hence," but *now*, in the "today which will never dawn again."

All about us truth abounds, not only, as the proverb would have us believe, "at the bottom of a well," but close to our vision, if we would stretch out our hands and tear away the network of pretense enshrouding it. Under the satirized mistakes of today may be discovered the livable truths of tomorrow!

H. H. H.

Alameda, California

TRIAL MARRIAGE

CHARACTERS

RODNEY FINLAYSON, an artist.
JANE, his wife.
EDWARD ALLEN, a business man.
BEATRICE, his wife.
TAD ALLEN, six years old.
MRS. PERRY.
ISABEL, her daughter; an art student.
SYDNEY PARKER, Isabel's fiancé.
PROFESSOR STATICMULLER, a lecturer.
BONG, a Chinese cook.

SCENES

ACT I—The living-room of the Finlaysons and the Allens.
ACT II—Mrs. Perry's sitting-room.
ACT III—Same as Act I.

PERIOD—The present.

TRIAL MARRIAGE

ACT I

SCENE: *The joint living-room of the* FINLAYSONS *and the* ALLENS. *It is a large, comfortable room, furnished partly as a studio, partly as a sitting-room. The entrances are at center, leading to the hall, and at left, leading to the* FINLAYSONS' *apartment. A stairway leads from above into the entrance-hall. The dining-room is presumably at right of the stairs, the street door at the left. A hat-stand is visible near the foot of the stairs.*

There is a mantel with mirror at R., a couch R. C. and a reading table on which are a lamp and books, periodicals, et cetera. Grouped about are easy-chairs.

At L. there is a table on which are artists' utensils. On the walls are sketches and canvases. Models are everywhere. There are two windows up L. C. and L. RODNEY FINLAYSON'S *easel is near the large window L. C., and a smaller one for* ISABEL *is near the window L. A typewriter is near* ISABEL'S *easel. Rugs are used for the whole room, and there are several small chairs.* ISABEL'S *hat, coat, and purse are on a chair near C. E.*

At Curtain RODNEY FINLAYSON *is discovered in*

front of his easel, painting. He is a slight, rather dark-complexioned man, wearing, as the distinctive feature of his costume, a black velvet studio jacket.

Having passed through various phases he has reached the stage of life when he is whimsically expectant of each new event, and ready to give all modern ideas a fair showing.

ISABEL *is a pretty, fair-haired girl of twenty-two, alert and capable, with a quick sense of humor. She wears a tailored skirt and shirtwaist. She is engaged in putting away her painting materials near her own easel. The light is fading. A fire is burning in the open grate R.*

Finlayson (*Glancing at the canvas on* ISABEL'S *easel*)—That's good—a decided improvement.

Isabel—I'm so glad. I was getting discouraged.

Finlayson (*Returning to his work*)—Never say that! Perseverance! Have you finished for the day? There is still a little light.

Isabel—I want to write those letters for you before I go.

Finlayson—That's good of you, but I hate to trouble you.

Isabel—Why, you know I love to do it! (*Taking up some notes of a letter*) Here's this one to Mrs. Hamilton about that landscape, I'll copy it. And what about that sitting of Mr—er—Professor— what is the man's name?

Finlayson—Blest if I know! He's some freak or another who wants me to perpetuate his mug on canvas. My wife can tell you, she's always talking about him. She got me the job—er—(*whimsi-*

cally)—I mean the honor of the operation. I'm told it *is* an honor!

Isabel (*Laughing*)—Very well, I'll write the note now, and get the address later. Oh, I know—Staticmuller! That's his name. (*She sits at the typewriter.*)

Finlayson—Staticmuller, yes, I believe it is. Some sort of a culture bug, isn't he? What's his specialty?

Isabel—I think he lectures on various new-thought problems—the management of husbands, and so forth.

Finlayson—Judging by his name he might be one of those chaps who can tell you how many postage stamps it would take to encircle the globe, or how one can live comfortably on thirty-seven and a half cents a week, using the half-cent for diversions!

Isabel (*Laughing*)—Especially if you're a woman!

Finlayson (*Laughing*)—Exactly! He's a brother to the Miss Nancy who hoards up the cotton tags off her laundry to make bedspreads. Choice cult!

Isabel—Ha! Ha! Ha!

Finlayson—Isabel, your sense of humor always exhilarates me. Do you know, you're a rare sort of girl?

Isabel—Why? Because I chortle over your jokes?

Finlayson—That's one reason, I suppose. You'll never become an early victim to dyspepsia.

Isabel—Not while you continue to exercise my giggles.

Finlayson—Well, let's get back to Staticmuller,

whatever his vocation. Sufficient that my wife admires him! (*painting*) You might say (*dictating*), "I can give you your first sitting at three o'clock on Tuesday next. Those following can be arranged later. Kindly let me hear as soon as possible if this will be agreeable to you. Believe me, et cetera——"

(ISABEL *takes this in her note book, and copies it on the machine.* FINLAYSON *glances up at the window, draws aside the curtains and pulls up the shade. During the preceding* TAD ALLEN *enters C. E. He comes in secretly, creeps to the couch and places a small package on it. He is just the impish, lovable sort of child who would be called* "TAD.")

Isabel (*In a moment, noticing him*)—Hello, Tad! What are you doing?

Tad (*Standing up quickly*)—Has mama come home yet?

Isabel—No, not yet.

Tad—I'm hungry.

Finlayson (*Laying aside his brush*)—So am I, Tad; now that you mention it.

Tad—I wish she'd come home! She and Aunt Jane are always at their old meetings!

Isabel—They'll soon be home now.

Tad (*Confidentially, hanging over the back of* ISABEL'S *chair*)—Do you know what's today? April Fools,' that's what!

Isabel—Gracious, so it is! I'd forgotten all about it.

Tad—I didn't. I remembered!

Isabel—Run away now, I'm busy. Go and help Bong get dinner.

Tad—I did help him—I know what's for dinner;

apple pie! (*He snatches* ISABEL'S *purse from the chair, unseen by her, and runs out ecstatically C. E.*)

Finlayson (*Painting again*)—It seems to me that Beatrice leaves Tad altogether too much with that heathen Chinee.

Isabel—It *has* been rather frequent lately, but I am supposed to look out for him a little when you don't keep me too busy.

Finlayson—Why should you play nursemaid for Beatrice?

Isabel (*Laughing*)—What a name to call a little friendly help!

Finlayson—You come here to paint pictures.

(TAD *creeps back and works over the purse and a thread. He places the purse on the floor near C. E., holds the thread in his hand, and conceals himself behind the portière.*)

Isabel—To learn to paint pictures, you mean; and to write a few letters for you. I wish you'd give me more of that sort of work. I feel that I do so little to repay you for all these lessons you are giving me.

Finlayson—Nonsense! Haven't I told you that I didn't want to hear any more about that? (*Throwing down his brush*) The light is gone.

(*He turns on the electric bulb near* ISABEL. *She continues typing while he draws down the shades, and covers his canvas.*)

(BONG *enters, C. E. He is the typical Chinese servant of the west, with close-cropped, shining, black hair; and is clothed in dark trousers and white linen coat, and over all a large white apron of Chinese pattern, tied with tapes at the back. He stoops to pick up the purse,* TAD *twitches the thread, the*

purse hops along, much to BONG's *surprise.* TAD *springs out, laughing and shouting.*)

Tad—April Fools'! April Fools'!

Bong (*Grunting good-naturedly*)—Aw, what maller you? I kill you my big knife.

Tad (*Dancing about*)—April Fools'! April Fools'!

Finlayson—See here, Tad Allen, cut that out! (TAD *subsides.*) Those are street tricks. Gentlemen don't behave so in drawing-rooms.

(BONG *turns on the lights at R.*)

Tad—Not ever, *ever?*

Finlayson (*Solemnly*)—Not ever, I assure you.

Tad—Then I don't want to be a gemplum; they don't have no fun.

(*He busies himself with the purse and thread, placing the purse C. E.*)

Bong (*To* ISABEL)—Ladies no come home yet?

Isabel—No, not yet, Bong.

(BONG *goes into the entrance hall and turns on the lights, then exits R.* TAD *follows him.* ISABEL *covers her machine and puts away papers.*)

Finlayson (*Looking at his watch*)—It is getting late. You'd better run along; I'll keep house.

Isabel—I am staying a little later this afternoon to see Mr. Allen. He said he would bring me a letter of recommendation for Sydney to the Carroll-Seymour Company. It will mean so much to Syd to get it!

Finlayson—Means something to you too, eh?

Isabel—Yes. If Sydney obtains the position, he and I can announce our engagement and be married in the fall.

Finlayson—What will Mrs. Perry say to that?

Isabel—Poor mother! She is never very strong, you know, and that is one reason why I have delayed announcing our engagement. Sydney has been very impatient; he can't understand it. But she is feeling rather well just now, and if Syd gets this position she will be willing.

Finlayson—Then I suppose it will be all up with this. (*Indicating studio work*) You women are all alike—confoundedly eager to run your heads into the noose!

Isabel (*Laughing*)—Well, you ran your head into it, didn't you?

Finlayson—Oh, Jane and I hit it off all right! The rare times I see her I'm rather fond of Jane. We don't trouble each other much.

Isabel—You and Mrs. Finlayson are my model couple.

Finlayson (*In affected horror*)—My benighted girl! What a standard!

Isabel (*Seriously*)—I like the way you take each other for granted.

Finlayson—There's really nothing like it. For instance, Jane's sense of humor. She hasn't any, you know, but I always take it for granted.

Isabel (*Ruefully*)—Neither has Syd. I wish I could take it for granted, but I can't; it's too far-fetched!

Finlayson—In a case like that the only way to do is to cultivate your own to the fullest extent. That has been my plan right along.

Isabel—Well, I think I'll try it.

Finlayson—It would simply be a waste of genius, if you didn't. Keep it up. In time you can't fail to awaken Parker's.

Isabel—But you admit that you're not always successful with Mrs. Finlayson.

Finlayson—No, but I'm always hoping. Sometimes I think I detect a responsive gleam. The turning point is bound to come some day.

Isabel (*Smiling*)—Then I'll take your advice and continue to chase a forlorn hope. Syd is *so good!*

Finlayson (*Ruefully*)—So's Jane! Scandalously so! (*Both laugh.*)

Tad (*Running in C. E., jumping at* ISABEL *and clinging to her*)—Say, Isabel, what's a apple-pie bed?

Finlayson (*Removing* TAD *forcibly*)—Really, Tad, if you were *my* son!

Tad—I guess I like my own dad best!

Isabel—Never mind, Tad, come here. I'll tell you about an apple-pie bed. (*Mysteriously*) You tie up all the sheets and the pillow-cases, you know, and the night-clothes, and you put everything—— (*They sit on the couch and whisper together, laughing.*)

(EDWARD ALLEN *enters hastily, C. E. He is of medium complexion, rather tall, and heavily built; an average type of the fairly prosperous business man. He sees only the obvious in life; and when affairs are going his way, this satisfies him.*)

Allen—Hello, everybody! Say, Beatrice, hurry on dinner, will you? I promised Carroll—why, where *is* Bee?

Finlayson (*Drawling*)—Oh, she and Jane are out at some club meeting, learning what brutes you and I are, and what they must do to tame us!

Isabel—Good-evening, Mr. Allen.

Tad (*Springing into* ALLEN'S *arms*)—Hello, dad!

Allen—How d'ye do, Miss Perry. Pardon my noise. Hello, Tad, you old rascal!

Isabel—I think Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Finlayson went to the New Century Club this afternoon.

Tad—Dad! I don't never, never want to be a gemplum.

Allen—No? You grieve me, son, you grieve me. What's your reason?

Tad (*Indicating* FINLAYSON)—Not the kind he is anyway. Just a nice, noisy gemplum like you, daddy!

Allen—Humph!

Finlayson—That lets me out.

Allen—Here, you young fellow, you weigh a ton. Run along. (TAD *runs out C. E.*)

Isabel (*Putting on her hat*)—I must go.

Allen—Wait a moment, Miss Perry; I have something for you. (*He takes a letter from his pocket.*)

Isabel—Oh, Mr. Allen, you're so good!

Finlayson—You and I are getting uncomfortably virtuous, Ned. My sprouting wings feel cramped under this jacket. Excuse me while I change. Good-night, Isabel. (*He goes out L.*)

Isabel—Good-night. Don't mind me!

Allen—Here's the letter I promised you for Mr. Parker to the Carroll-Seymour Company. (*They sit on the couch, and he gives it to her.* TAD, *anxious to see if they notice his package, creeps back and hides behind them.*) It is in a double envelope, you see. I hope it will help.

Isabel—A recommendation from you, Mr. Allen, makes it practically certain.

Allen—Carroll told me yesterday that he was looking for just such a man. I don't think there is much doubt but what Parker will make good. I intended to phone him about the letter today, but it slipped my mind.

Isabel—Oh, no, no! You would have spoilt everything. It's a secret. I'm keeping it for his birthday tomorrow.

Allen—Oh, ho! Then I'm not to tell, eh?

Isabel (*Laughing*)—No, indeed. It's a secret between you and me. Thank you so much! You have made me very happy.

(TAD *peers around at them, listening intently.* ISABEL *rises,* TAD *drops down again behind the couch.*)

Allen (*Cordially pressing her hand*)—Don't mention it! Always glad to put in a word when I can.

(BONG *enters C. E.*)

Bong—Ladies no come yet?

Isabel—Not yet, Bong. You'll have to wait dinner a little longer.

Tad (*Coming around the couch, whining*)—I'm hungry!

Bong (*Grumbling*)—Aw, no good! Dinner all spoil'em. (*He goes out.*)

Allen—Blank these women's clubs! I've got a directors' meeting at the Indoor Yacht Club at seven-thirty, and——

Isabel (*Slyly*)—And that *is* important!

Allen (*Recovering himself*)—Oh, I guess we men *are* selfish brutes; but Tad and I are hungry!

Let's get a new mama, Taddy—one who is always on the job to feed us, eh?

Tad (*Shouting*)—Yes, I know who—Isabel!

Isabel (*Confused*)—Tad!

Allen (*Laughing loudly*)—Look here, old man, you'd better not be so prompt.

Isabel—I must go. (*Hastily going for her jacket*) I wonder where my purse is. (TAD *laughs.*)

(*The front doorbell rings,* BONG *crosses C. E. to answer.*)

Tad—I know where 'tis! I know where 'tis!

(SYDNEY PARKER *enters.* BONG *crosses C. E. again to dining-room R.* PARKER *is precisely the type of "not good enough man" for a splendid girl like* ISABEL. *He is rather handsome, and always fashionably dressed. Bred in the conventional mold, he has not the faintest idea that he is not good enough for anybody. His egotism is wholly unconscious, the result of his perfectly correct upbringing.*)

Isabel—Oh, here's Syd!

Parker—I thought I might just catch you. (*He greets* ALLEN *and* TAD, *picks up the purse.*) Hullo, what's this?

Tad (*Runs to him, laughing and shouting*)—April Fools'! April Fools'!

Parker (*Catches* TAD *in his arms*)—You rascal!

Isabel—My purse! Oh, you monkey!

Parker—It's a fine night to walk home, Isabel.

Isabel—Good! I need some air.

(ALLEN *assists* ISABEL *with her jacket; she puts the letter in her jacket pocket, with a meaning look at him.*)

Tad (*Whispering to* PARKER)—You mustn't ask her about the secret.

Parker (*Who has noticed the look between* ALLEN *and* ISABEL)—What secret?

Tad—Shuh! *I* know.

Allen (*Aside to* ISABEL)—That's between you and me, eh?

Isabel (*Beaming*)—Yes. Good-night!

Parker (*Eyes* ALLEN *keenly*)—Good-night. (*He and* ISABEL *go out C. E.*)

Tad (*With a huge sigh*)—I think I like my own mama best.

Allen—Yes, Taddy; so do I. Now, you'd better not say anything to mama about what we were talking. She might feel bad. We men understand these things, you know.

Tad—Yes, we men does. (ALLEN *approaches the couch,* TAD *becomes anxious.*)

(FINLAYSON *enters L. wearing a business suit.*)

Finlayson—Say, where's dinner?

Allen—Where are the housewives who order dinner?

Finlayson—Oh, get in line, Ned! Order your own dinner!

Allen (*Crossly*)—Well, it makes me sore. Here I've got a meeting—and Carroll—(*Going C. E.*)—Bong! Oh, Bong! Put dinner on the table. We won't wait any longer.

Bong (*Off stage*)—Allight!

Allen—It strikes me that these modern notions are *dee*cidedly mixed. "Order dinner," yes! That's all very fine; but when Bee and Jane register politically to help make the laws to put us brute males in our proper places, under what title do they

qualify? *Housewives,* Fin; *housewives,* do you hear?

Finlayson (*Lazily*)—Well, here's their house; and they're wives, aren't they? I don't care much when I get my food, as long as there's plenty of it when it comes, eh, Tad?

Tad—I'm hungry! Come on, daddy! (*Dragging* ALLEN *toward C. E.*)

Allen—Wives ought to be just as busy providing things for the inner man as husbands are providing raiment for the outer woman.

Finlayson—My dear Ned, don't you know that when a woman and a tornado make up their minds to go anywhere, nothing on earth can stop them?

Allen—I attend to my work during business hours, I expect others to do the same. I come home a little late thinking dinner will be ready so I can get to a meeting. No dinner—no wife—no anything!

Finlayson—As far as I can make out, the dinner's here; so's the house. The only thing lacking is the wife, exercising the same privilege of being "a little late!"

Allen—Well, the main reason we set up this joint establishment was to economise time for them as well as money. But they don't seem to have any more time than they had before.

Finlayson—Bromide! "Nobody has!"

Allen—Oh, you're always siding with the women! Beatrice is forever holding you up to me as a pattern. You're "Johnny on the spot," right enough!

Tad (*Giving his father a series of jerks, saying softly*)—I'm hungry—I'm hungry!

Finlayson—She flatters me. You see, we've got

to learn our proper places. It's hard on *us,* of course. We're only "incidents," you know, in the general scheme. What was it Jane told me I was the other day? Professor Staticmuller told *her.* A—a—a—er—a "visualised mental projection," I believe it was. (*Airily*) You and I are just thoughts, Ned, just thoughts!

Allen—Oh, shut up! (TAD *is amazed.*)

Finlayson—That's the sort of gentleman you want to be, eh, Tad?

(*A Chinese dinner-gong sounds off-stage. The two men go out C. E. toward R.* TAD *runs ahead of them, shouting "Dinner! Dinner!"*)

(*Immediately the sound of lively chatter is heard in the entrance hall.* JANE FINLAYSON *and* BEATRICE ALLEN *enter C. E. They are in becoming street attire.* MRS. FINLAYSON *is serious, inconsistent; but possessed of higher mentality than* MRS. ALLEN, *whose mind is of a sort with her fluffy, fair hair, which is never in order.* JANE'S *hair is smooth and dark, and her serious eyes make one wish to awaken in them that "responsive gleam" of which her husband spoke. They come to the center of the room, completely absorbed in their discussion. They talk rapidly and simultaneously, the dialogue fitting in disjointedly.* TAD *rushes back and swings on his mother's arm.* FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN *return, and remain standing in the doorway. The two women do not perceive them.*)

Tad—Mama—mama!

Beatrice (*Absent-mindedly kissing* TAD)—Just the same, Jane, he's wonderful——

Jane—It's all so vital, so——

Beatrice—I don't care what Mrs. Potter says, he has the most——

Jane—The test of a true marriage is in the——

Beatrice—He must have been terribly unhappy himself. Why, didn't you notice when he——

Jane—He's probably had an unfortunate love-affair, and now he is trying——

Beatrice—I'm sure of it! He can never have been tied to the ordinary humdrum——

Jane—He speaks from experience. Only those who have——

Beatrice—That fascinating accent of his! It just haunts me, and——

Jane—One must live these precepts to——

Beatrice—Just what I think. Anyone as noble-looking as he is must have had——

Jane—Everyone should have the chance to decide these things by a fair trial. Why, what do we women ever——

Beatrice—His eyes are positively tragic. They seem to see far, far——

Jane—Up to now MAN has——

(*They continue more volubly, indistinguishably, going R. and laying down their handbags, gloves, et cetera.*)

Finlayson—What did I tell you, Ned? Just now we're not even "visible." Let's see if we are! (*Slipping across the room he plants himself directly in front of the women.*)

Allen—Oh, rot! I'm going to dinner. (*He starts out; the women become aware of them.*)

Beatrice (*Airily*)—Oh, hello, boys! Tad, don't hang so on mother's arm. (TAD *runs to* ALLEN.)

Jane—Why, you have finished work early today, haven't you!

Allen (*Returning to C. E.*)—*Early!*

Finlayson—My watch is probably wrong—everything about me is! In fact I don't even know if it *is* a watch! Is it, Jane? Anyway, it says it's seven o'clock.

Jane—Heavens, it can't be! Rod, you're joking. Good-evening, dear. (*Kissing him casually*)

Finlayson—I was never more serious, my treasure!

Jane—I never know whether you are in earnest or not.

Finlayson—I'm trying to cultivate your sense of humor; my watch is probably lying.

Allen (*C.*)—Well, my hunger is no lie. See here, Beatrice, I'm tired of this. Late dinners three or four nights a week! When it isn't a culture club, it's a bridge fight. It's enough to rile any man!

Beatrice—"Three or four nights!" You're too absurd, Ned.

Allen (*Excitedly*)—That's no joke! Am I right, Fin? Haven't we eaten chipped beef, and dried-up fish, and—and——"

Finlayson—Don't ask *me,* I don't remember.

Allen—Well, I remember, and I'm sick of such a bill-of-fare.

Finlayson—Say, Ned, you made a mistake in marrying a wife. What you really intended was to engage a cook!

Allen (*Turning on him indignantly*)—Well, what did you marry for, "Beau Brummel"?

Finlayson—I married a "companion for my middle-age, and a nurse for my declining years."

Jane (*Alarmed*)—Why, Rod, dear, aren't you well? (*He looks at her intently.*) Oh, you're joking!

Finlayson (*Patiently*)—Yes, Jane. In time, you know, I hope to have you so responsive that——

Jane—Time is all so fleeting—so vaporous—so——

Beatrice—If you men had something to think of—of course, I suppose you really do keep busy during the day, Ned, but——

Allen—Busy! Ye Gods!

Beatrice—In your leisure moments like these, I mean. If you had something of vital importance, something *uplifting,* to discuss with us, for instance! Now we——

Tad—I'm hungry!

Beatrice—Run away to Bong and get your soup, Tad.

Tad—I want to eat my supper with my daddy.

Allen (*Shortly*)—Come on, Fin. (*He and* TAD *go out C. E. toward R.*)

Finlayson (*Helping* BEATRICE *take off her coat*)—I'm not hungry. I'm doing something "vital." What was the subject of the lecture today, Beatrice?

Beatrice (*Solemnly*)—Marriage. Thank you, Rod, you're so thoughtful!

Finlayson—Hm! As serious as that? No wonder you were late!

Jane—She has told you only half. *Trial Marriages* were discussed. Oh, it is a vast, vast subject! Really, when I think of it——

Finlayson (*Helping* JANE *take off her coat*)—Why *think? You* are all settled and done for.

Jane (*Calmly, taking off her hat*)—Oh, no, Rod;

that's where you make a mistake! We must not consider ourselves settled. That is the point Professor Staticmuller made.

Beatrice—We must not consider ourselves settled *ever*. "All is subject to change!"

Finlayson—Er? You mean that—er—*me*—or Ned—or any of us, might be changed any time?

Jane—Certainly; it is a law of nature—(*grandiosely*)—"fluid nature."

Finlayson (*With pretended seriousness*)—And is this change—er—voluntary, or are we just pitched helter-skelter, "willy-nilly," as the poet saith?

Jane—Our will has much to do with it. All that is in my past, for instance——

Finlayson—Your *past?* Jane, you have deceived me! You never told me you had a past!

Jane—Don't be crazy, Rod. What the Professor means is this: You draw your past and future together, and, and——

Finlayson—And tie them up in a hard knot?

Jane—Oh, Rod, you confuse me! And with their help (*slowly*) you make of the present a concrete ideal. We must throw everything out of the present that in any way hampers this ideal.

Finlayson—Including husbands and wives, eh?

Beatrice—That's his idea, and I *thoroughly* agree with him. If you could see his deep-set eyes when he talks about it, Rodney! I just wish you and Ned could be there!

Finlayson—Christopher! I wish we could!

Jane—We are going to try and arrange a meeting for the husbands.

Finlayson—We need it, poor beasts! Say, how about eating?

(EDWARD ALLEN *enters, C. E., a slice of bread in his hand.*)

Allen—See here, aren't you ever coming to dinner?

Finlayson—Our "goose is cooked," Ned; we're all to be changed!

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—It's no joke, Rod Finlayson. I believe *all* the Professor said. Do you suppose if I'd had a chance at a trial marriage of six months, say, with that cross old bear, that he would have dared to make such a row because dinner was late once in awhile?

Allen—Eh? What's got you now, Bee?

Finlayson—Be calm, old man! She finds her marriage with you a mistake.

(ALLEN *looks from one to the other in angry bewilderment.*)

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—I'm not excited and I'm not angry. I'm looking at the matter calmly and sensibly, as he said we should.

Allen—*Who* said?

Beatrice—The Professor.

Allen (*Choking angrily on his bread*)—What's he got on me, I'd like to know!

Jane—Not on you alone; on any man. Take ourselves, for instance. We should have been perfectly free to change our minds if we found we were not suited after a stated number of months. It's all quite simple.

Finlayson—I see. A sort of try-out, eh?

Beatrice—You do put things in such a bald way, Rod.

Finlayson—Well, the whole thing is rather bald and raw, it strikes me.

Allen—Do you really believe in all that bosh, Beatrice?

Beatrice—Of course I do! It's all quite true.

Allen—And you think if you keep on trying, that you're going to find someone who's going to stand all this damned nonsense? (*There are little shrieks from the Women.* What's the time limit your blooming Professor gives you?

Jane—He thinks six months would be a fair test.

Allen—It's never too late, is it? I wish you'd hurry on that husbands' meeting! I'd like to smash his old head for him!

Beatrice—You're just as mean as you can be! (*Beginning to cry.*) I don't want any dinner. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! (*She gathers up her wraps, and handbag, and goes upstairs.*)

Allen (*Looking rather ashamed of himself*)—Well, Jane, I'm sorry; but it does make me sore.

Finlayson—Don't you want your dinner, Jane?

Jane (*Casually*)—Oh, no, we had a late tea! Don't wait for me. (*She gathers up her wraps, et cetera, and goes out L.*)

(*The two Men gaze at each other in disgust.*)

Allen—Doesn't it make you tired, all this bosh those men put into the women's heads?

Finlayson—It isn't all bosh, you know; but the dear souls get an exaggerated idea of these new notions, and they'll never rest until they give us a turn at being victims.

Allen—You're a queer guy, Fin. Do you mean to say that you put any stock in this?

Finlayson—There's a lot of truth in it, isn't there? What did Bee know about you, for instance, when she married you?

Allen (*Reluctantly*)—Oh—well!

Finlayson—Same here! I can't say I knew much about Jane, though. Her mother saw to that.

Allen—Well, *I* don't see any sense in kicking up all this rumpus. Something's got to be done right here and now. Bee's getting too unsettled. I never can find anything—always having to buy new shirts!——

Finlayson—Too bad you didn't marry a laundress!

Allen—Meals late three or four times a week!

Tad (*Appearing C. E., a chop bone in his hand, his face smeared*)—Say, daddy, why don't you come to dinner?

Allen—Damned if I want any dinner! Run along, Tad; finish your own.

Finlayson—Say, Tad, tell Bong to bring me a plate of soup in here. (*He clears one end of the studio table by pushing back brushes, papers, et cetera.*) I feel Bohemian tonight.

Tad—What's "henian"?

Finlayson—Something a "real gentleman" never is, Taddy. (Tad *goes out C. E.*) What do you say, Ned, to giving the girls a try at their new idea?

Allen—What do you mean?

Finlayson—Why, if they're so stuck on having a change, let's give it to them.

Allen (*Bewildered*)—Eh?

Finlayson—Oh, I don't imagine they'd let us go far! But a little premeditated campaign might have a good effect on the dinner-hour, and your shirts might not go off on such long vacations. Taddy might not see quite so much of Bong.

Allen—I don't get your working idea.

(BONG *enters, C. E., carrying a plate of soup, bread, et cetera, which* FINLAYSON *directs him to place on the studio table. Exit* BONG.)

Finlayson—Let's fall in with their plan. I don't think they *have any,* so that makes it all the more venturesome. (*Ruminating*) Suppose—suppose—suppose you and I have been thinking along the "trial marriage" line also—suppose we've even gone so far as to be tired of the present arrangement. Suppose——

Allen (*Angrily*)—I'll suppose nothing of the sort. You're crazy!

Finlayson (*Sits and begins to eat his soup*)—Yes, I've been told that before—often! Of course this will all be a huge lie, but what does one more matter after all we *have* told them?

Allen—I tell Beatrice everything.

Finlayson—Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Chokes*)

Allen—I don't see the joke.

Finlayson (*Rising, still coughing*)—Well, let's tell them this anyway. Come, hurry up, man; gather together your ideas on marriage! Haven't you any?

Allen—Damned if I know!

Finlayson—You see? Beatrice was right, you haven't anything "vital" to think about!

Allen—Oh, hang!

Finlayson—We'll have it all arranged by the time they come back, ready to spend the evening in sweet domesticity. We're willing to let them change us if they're so unhappy! You saw yourself how little I, or the dinner, or anything else around here mattered to Jane. They both need a change to make them aware of us. (*Business-like*)

Now whom have you been thinking about for second choice?

Allen (*Hotly*)—You know perfectly well I haven't been thinking of any such thing!

Finlayson—Tut, tut, man! Didn't I see you and Isabel Perry collaborating over some secret this very evening? There you are! Isabel's the very one—thrifty, pretty, slight leaning toward art—not enough to matter! Fond of children, she's the girl for you. That's settled!

Allen (*With sarcasm*)—Where does Parker come in?

Finlayson—He can settle his own affairs. We can't make arrangements for everybody! Now for me—who in thunder? I like your nerve, Ned; you've taken the only girl in sight!

(BEATRICE *is seen descending the stairs.*)

Allen (*Protesting*)—Here's Bee! We can't carry out any such fool plan.

Finlayson—Buck up! Just watch me! You follow my lead. All you've got to do is to agree to everything I say. I'll arrange all the details.

Allen (*Smoking furiously*)—All right; go ahead; I'm game!

(BEATRICE *enters C. E., simultaneously with* JANE, *L.* BEATRICE *wears an injured-innocent air. She sits R. and embroiders.* JANE *is calm and casual, as though nothing had happened. She picks up a heavy volume from the studio table, and prepares to settle down with it. She notices* RODNEY'S *soup plate and other things.*)

Jane—Why, Rod, what have you been doing?

Finlayson—Merely following my own inclinations. You might call it reversion to type, I sup-

pose. The only reason I eat my meals regularly in the dining-room is because *you* are supposed to be there. "Gather round the family board," that sort of thing. But when you don't "gather," why, food is food "where'er its home"! Poor old Tad is doing the "gathering" stunt all by himself tonight!

Allen—Humph!

Beatrice (*Rising suddenly*)—I must see to Tad! (*She goes out C. E. toward R.* JANE *sits and reads.*)

Allen (*Throwing himself full length on the couch*)—Jane, what did you say the Prof.'s name was that talked to you today?

(FINLAYSON *gives* ALLEN *a warning look, and goes back to his soup.*)

Jane (*Busily reading*)—Professor Staticmuller.

Finlayson—You liked him, you said?

Jane—Oh, *exceedingly!* He's *so* progressive; but very much misunderstood. As he himself says, he's quite fifty years ahead of the times.

Finlayson—Oh! Feels lonely, does he?

Jane—I suppose he does, poor man! He's not too advanced for me. Why, he carries me right along with him!

(BEATRICE *appears C. E., talking off to* TAD.)

Finlayson—Is that so? Hm!

Beatrice—No, Tad; I said only one piece of pie. (*She enters.*) Who carries you right along with him, Jane?

Jane—Professor Staticmuller.

Beatrice (*Enthusiastically*)—He's a *dear!*

Allen (*Puffing furiously at his cigar*)—Give us some of his dope.

(FINLAYSON *sends him another warning look.*

Both Women begin to talk at once, in fragments. Finally one hears:)

Beatrice—It isn't what he *says* so much, as the *way* he says it—and——

Jane—This is one of his books. He——

Beatrice—He has the most adorable accent that ever——

Jane—If you would only take time to read this, Rod, it would give you something to think about.

Finlayson—Something "vital," eh? It looks solid.

Beatrice—Jane *reads* him, but I am contented simply to listen to him. I put my mind into his hands, as it were.

Allen—Humph!

Beatrice—Eh?

Allen (*Sputtering*)—Oh, nothing!

Jane—He does his own publishing. Naturally no publisher can be found who is progressive enough to have faith in his material.

Finlayson—That's where the publishers make a grand mistake. They're all too conservative—a lot of old grannies!

Jane (*Pleased*)—Why, Rod, how nice of you!

Beatrice—I didn't know you ever thought of such things.

Finlayson—On the contrary my mind is teeming with the new thought of the century.

Jane—Why, Rod!

Finlayson—I tell you, girls, it needed only this evening's incidents to bring to a flame the smoldering furnace within me!

Jane—What *are* you talking about?

Beatrice (*Enthusiastically*)—I have always felt you had something in you, Rod.

Finlayson—I have! I have! And Ned and I have been talking things over, haven't we, Ned?

Allen—Um-hm.

Beatrice and Jane—What things?

Finlayson—I don't believe much in coincidences; I believe more in the projection of thought. I think it must be that, don't you, Ned?

Allen—Yes—I—I—think it's that.

(*The two women are all curiosity.*)

Finlayson—It's immaterial whether you put the thought into our minds or we put it into yours—just the same, we've been thinking along the same lines all unknown to each other.

Beatrice (*Breathlessly*)—What lines?

Jane—Rod, you're so slow!

Finlayson—This trial marriage stunt.

Beatrice—Well, what do *you* know about it?

Finlayson—Not much, I must confess; yet deep-rooted here in my chest are convictions which your arguments tonight have clinched. Ned and I——

Beatrice—I don't believe Ned has any deep convictions in his chest; have you, Ned?

Allen—You bet I have!

Finlayson—You see, it was a rather delicate matter to broach. I suppose Ned and I have still remaining in us a few of the traditional ideas of the old-fashioned male. We——

Jane—Really, Rodney, are you sure you had only soup for dinner?

Finlayson—Quite sure, my dear Jane; and I haven't finished that yet. To come to the point, for you are evidently as weary of my preface as you are of *me*—Ned and I are—er—in fact, we are willing

to be changed. We were only waiting for you to say so.

Beatrice and Jane—Changed?

Allen (*Beginning to enjoy the situation*)—Yes, *anxiously* waiting, we might say.

Finlayson—Your friend Staticmuller—er, pardon me, that sounds rather off-hand—Professor Staticmuller—has convinced you of certain things by his experience of life fifty years hence. Now we needed only your confirmation of our thoughts. (*Hammering his chest*) It takes courage to be the pioneers of any new movement. We are willing to throw ourselves into this for the benefit of posterity.

Beatrice—What?

Jane—What are you going to do?

Finlayson (*Enjoying himself hugely*)—We are willing to throw off the yoke of convention. We had no chance when we were younger. We ran our heads blindly into the noose and thought we must stay tied all our days. Now comes the prophet Staticmuller offering us light along the new way. What if we didn't try it at first? Is it too late now? No, I say—a thousand times, no!

Allen (*Making a noble effort to help*)—I read somewhere the other day, "It's never too late to mend."

Beatrice—Oh, pooh!

Jane (*Solemnly*)—Beatrice, this is serious. I feel that we are on the eve of a great upheaval in our lives.

Finlayson—Serious? Well, I should *think!* You have been the injured victims of circumstances. Blindness and ignorance landed you in our un-

worthy arms. Now we declare you *free,* to choose whom and where you like, leaving us the same privilege.

Jane (*Gasping*)—Rod—I—I——!

Beatrice—Ned! Are you in this?

Allen—Um-hm.

Finlayson—This makes it all very easy for Ned. He really has cut the path clear for all of us. Brave old Ned! You wouldn't think it, would you?

Beatrice (*Still all fluffy assurance*)—Ned, what have you been doing?

Allen (*Sitting up. With a valiant effort he outdoes* FINLAYSON.)—Oh, nothing much! Merely choosing your successor.

Beatrice (*Gasps, and sits down in the nearest chair*)—What?

(JANE *drops her book with a thud.*)

Finlayson (*Going to* ALLEN, *patting him on the back*)—Good old Ned! You've got that off your chest. It will be so much easier now. It makes it so much easier for me!

Beatrice—What?—What?

(JANE *stands transfixed, gazing at* FINLAYSON *with growing suspicion.*)

Allen—That's what I said.

Finlayson—While scientists and Staticmullers have been filling books with these things, Ned and I have been getting ready to live them.

Jane (*Stately and serious*)—It's strange you have never given any indication before of thinking these things.

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—I insist upon knowing what you mean right away! Immediately, I say!

Finlayson—Ned, are you ready for me to an-

nounce, here and now, the name of the one whom you feel destiny meant for you?

Allen—Go ahead! I'm sure a person fifty years hence wouldn't mind, and I don't think Isabel will.

Beatrice—Isabel!

Jane—Isabel! (*They gaze at each other in consternation.*)

Finlayson—Yes. Acting on the impulse of that projected thought, Ned confided her name to me only one short half-hour ago.

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—Ned, this is a very poor joke.

Allen (*Solemnly*)—Beatrice, forgive me! I wish it was a joke!

The Women—Isabel!—Isabel!

Allen—That's what I said.

Beatrice (*Gradually becoming hysterical*)—So this is what comes of allowing Isabel Perry to come here day after day, pretending to take painting lessons, staying late every afternoon so she could see Ned when he came home, and—and——

Jane—Beatrice, restrain yourself. Don't you know that you will gain nothing by all this excitement?

Beatrice—I guess you'd be excited too. I demand to know, Ned Allen, how long this affair has been going on? Rodney, you have been here; I insist upon knowing all you know about it!

Finlayson—You must not ask me to betray Ned's confidence. He may tell you himself. Brace up, old man.

Allen (*Haltingly*)—You see—all this would never have happened, if we had known about this scheme earlier. Instead of eight years—you and I

would have had our six months—and that would have been the end of it.

Beatrice (*In tears*)—End of what?

Jane—Be calm, dear; be calm!

Finlayson—Yes, be calm! I have a surprise in store for you. (*She pays no attention to him.*)

Beatrice—Calm! I won't be calm! I demand to know what end he's talking about! I'll show Isabel Perry, and you, too, Ned Allen! How can you sit there and smoke, and tell me such things, and your innocent child in there eating apple-pie and——

Allen—It *is* hard, but I understood that Staticmuller had prepared your mind for any contingency that might arise any time this side of fifty years.

(Beatrice *continues to gasp and sputter.*)

Jane—Oh, he never comes down to personalities! He is so broad and general!

Finlayson—I see. Then we are ahead of him. We are dealing in personalities. His theories are striking us right where we live.

Beatrice—I'm going right now to talk to that hussy, that designing little minx! I'll talk to her mother about her; *she* ought to know. Coming here pretending she's engaged to a perfectly good young man—and, and all the time she's——

Jane (*Restraining her*)—Beatrice, wait! Think what a shock it will be to Mrs. Perry. Be calm. It will do no harm to wait till tomorrow.

Finlayson—Yes, wait till tomorrow, Beatrice. Meanwhile——

Beatrice—I'm going now!

Allen (*Yawning*)—Oh, wait till morning, Bee! It's getting late.

Beatrice—Late!

Jane—We must talk this thing out. You won't gain anything by too much haste.

Finlayson—No; what are a few hours? You have already waited eight years!

Allen—Take until tomorrow to think it over, Bee. Besides, Rod has something to say for himself. Spit it out! We were going to stand by each other, you know.

Jane—Rodney? Why, he never sees anyone—he——

Finlayson—Ah, how little you have understood me!

Beatrice (*Breaking away from* JANE)—I'm going!

Jane—Be calm, dear. Rod, what are you saying?

Finlayson—Beatrice, stay. You are in this.

Beatrice—Yes, I *am* in this! Let me go, Jane.

Finlayson (*Impressively*)—Beatrice, I expect no response from you now; I ask none. Silently I have lived in your house, have watched you, coming and going, never giving me a thought——

Beatrice (*Beginning to suspect his meaning, and growing quiet through curiosity*)—Why, Rod, I think of you a great deal. You are only delaying me now, I *must* go!

Finlayson (*Rapidly*)—Haven't you guessed? Can't you grasp my meaning? Don't you know that you—*don't* look at me like that, Jane! Yes, Beatrice, I feel that you, that you alone—— (*He turns away as though choked with emotion.*)

Jane (*Gasping, releases* BEATRICE)—Rodney!

Allen (*Gazing at* BEATRICE)—Great Scott!

Beatrice (*With signs of pleased amazement*)—Why, Rodney! Impossible!

Finlayson (*With shaking voice*)—Why "impossible"? As Jane says, I have seen no one. Day after day I slave here in this corner, seeing no one, except Tad and Isabel; caring for no one—— (*With a comprehensive gesture*) Now you all know why! (*Hammering his chest*) Oh, what a relief to be free at last! To be relieved of this secret burden! Heaven be praised for Staticmuller and his wonderful creed!

(*During this speech* JANE *has drawn away from* BEATRICE, *gradually becoming rigid.*)

Jane—Rodney!

Beatrice (*Slightly triumphant, glances toward* ALLEN *furtively, and consciously pleased, toward* FINLAYSON)—Why, Rodney—I never *dreamed!* I never suspected the faintest—I don't know *what* to say!

Finlayson (*Waxing enthuiastic over his success*)—I appreciate your feelings. I myself never knew before what to say. A new-born courage has come to me. I feel like a man delivered from the bondage of a—of a——

Allen (*Shortly*)—See here, Fin, aren't you rather overdoing this?

Finlayson (*Surprised*)—It is something when once found cannot be overdone.

Jane (*Approaching* ALLEN)—So this—so this is what I am indebted to you for! To *you,* who neglect your wife, and leave her to wander aimlessly from club to club—from——

Beatrice (*Indignantly*)—Aimlessly? No such thing! I have always had a distinct purpose. You

know perfectly well that you are the one who is aimless, disagreeing with this one and that one—while I——

Jane—Yes, *you!* You believe everything they tell you, and half the time it is because you don't know what they're saying, you're so busy raving over their eyes or their hair—or—or——

Beatrice—You just take that back, Jane Finlayson! Take it back, I say!

Finlayson (*Aside to* ALLEN)—We've got something started, all right.

Allen (*Drawing himself up, turns away, to* FINLAYSON'S *amazement*)—I say, Bee——

Beatrice (*Haughtily*)—I think the less I hear from you, the better!

Allen—Look here, this has gone far enough. I——

Jane—I should say it had; but one would scarcely expect you to be the one to say so!

(TAD *runs in C. E. He looks from one to the* other. ALL *except* FINLAYSON *are much excited and talking loudly.*)

Allen—I haven't talked half enough. I have a whole lot to say. I'm going to lay down some new rules for this household. Just let me——

Beatrice—Oh, indeed? Who has made *you* lord of the house? Do you hear that, Jane?

Jane—Yes, I hear. Well, it's time something was done.

Allen—I seem to be the only sane one in the bunch. I'm sick of all this tom-foolery!

(ALL *stop, and gasp for breath.*)

Tad (*To* FINLAYSON)—Now I don't know whether *you* or *Daddy* is a gemplum!

Finlayson—Poor old Tad! It *is* a poser!

Beatrice—Shuh! We are just wasting time. Taddy, run and get me my hat and coat from off my bed.

Tad—Oh, mama! Don't go out again!

Beatrice—Hush! Do as I say.

(TAD *goes out C. E. and upstairs, sniffling.*)

Jane—Beatrice, you haven't had your dinner—you——

Beatrice (*Scornfully*)—Dinner! Nothing shall stop me!

Finlayson (*Going to her*)—Have you no heart?

Beatrice—I'll talk with *you* later. I know where my duty lies now. (*Going to the stair foot.*) Taddy! Hurry!

(TAD *appears reluctantly on the stairs, comes down, carrying the hat and coat.* BEATRICE *goes hurriedly to the mirror and puts them on.* TAD *tries to help her with the coat.* FINLAYSON *has an impulse to prevent her going, then refrains.*)

Tad (*In a loud whisper*)—Mama, are you going after the letter?

Beatrice—What letter?

Tad—The one Papa gave Isabel. He said it was a secret.

Beatrice (*With an awful look at* ALLEN)—Yes, Tad, *I am!*

(BEATRICE *hurries out C. E.* TAD *runs after her, setting up a howl.* ALLEN *picks him up in his arms, starts out, then returns with a distracted look.*)

Finlayson—Of course, Jane, you must take your own time. I—er——

(JANE *turns on him a look of freezing dignity,*

takes up her heavy volume and goes out L. FINLAYSON *turns to* ALLEN *and begins to laugh silently.* ALLEN *does not respond.* FINLAYSON *chokes between laughs.*)

Finlayson—They came to it better than I thought they would. Ha! Ha! Ha! How about it, Ned? Will you go after Beatrice? She'll probably take a taxi. Parker and Isabel are strolling home in the moonlight, so Bee will arrive first, and be cooling her heels on the doorstep, waiting for them.

Allen (*With* TAD *in his arms, gazes indignantly at* FINLAYSON. *He goes toward C. E.*)—I should imagine you were the one to go after her! (*He goes upstairs, a much injured man.*)

Finlayson (*Pauses a moment in bewildered astonishment*)—Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Going to the studio table he surveys his cold soup, then yells*) Bong! Oh, Bong! (*At C. E.*) Bong! Bring me some hot soup. (*He continues to laugh.*)

(BONG *appears C. E.*)

Finlayson—Hot soup, Bong; all cold.

(BONG *goes out,* FINLAYSON *ruminates, takes up the telephone directory, searches for a name.* BONG *returns with the soup.*)

Say, Bong, you know where Miss Perry lives?

Bong—Who Miss Pelly?

Finlayson—Young lady—Isabel—*Miss Perry.* (*Indicating the typewriter*)

Bong—O—o—oh! Miss *Pelly.* I no know where lib.

Finlayson—Hm! No, of course not. (*Searching in the directory*) Perry—Perry—Charles, Daniel, Henry—I—here we are—Isabel! Great girl, to have it in her own name! All right, Bong,

never mind. (*He begins rapidly to eat his soup.*) Phew! This is hot!

(BONG *goes out C. E.* ALLEN *enters C. E. He goes furiously to the table R., takes a cigar out of a box on the table, lights it, puts on his overcoat from the hall-stand, and takes his hat.*)

Finlayson (*Cheerfully*)—Going out?

Allen—No! I'm going to bed!

(*He goes out C. E. to left. The front door is heard to slam.*)

Finlayson—Phew! (*He finished his soup, rises leisurely, starts toward the hall-stand, then remembers something he wants in his room, and goes quickly L. He meets* JANE *entering L.* FINLAYSON *bows low; she passes him haughtily. He goes out L.*)

Jane (*Goes to the couch and seats herself with much dignity. She notices* TAD'S *package, picks it up, opens it, and discovers a lot of old rags with a paper pinned to them. She reads*)—"April Fools'!" (*A light breaks over her face.*) "April Fools'!" (*She begins to laugh quietly. She sees* FINLAYSON'S *plot. An idea comes to her. She looks about, then picks up the book she has been carrying. She looks on the fly-leaf.*) Henrik Staticmuller! (*She goes to the telephone directory, looks up an address, takes up the 'phone and calls quietly:*) Hello!—Walnut 6578 please. Yes, *Walnut.*—Is this Walnut 6578? Professor Staticmuller?—Oh, Professor, this is Mrs. Finlayson—(*Very softly and distinctly, as she is afraid of being heard*) Mrs. Fin-lay-son. Yes, that's right. Could I see you a few minutes this evening?—Oh, no! (*Embarrassed*) If you could come to the house of a friend of mine, a *friend,*

yes!—She has an idea—Oh, no! An *idea,* I said, not *my dear.*—My friend has an idea that will work well into one of your lectures.—Yes.—Oh, yes, she's much interested in the meeting for husbands. Yes.—Can you be there in about half an hour?—Oh, thank you, I couldn't think of troubling you! I'll meet you there. Her number is 916 Washington Street.—Miss Perry, P-e-r-r-y.—Yes.—I'm just leaving in a moment. Good-by. (*She hangs up the 'phone, returns to the couch and pretends to read. She looks impatiently toward L.*)

(FINLAYSON *enters L. He wears his overcoat.* JANE *glances up coldly, but continues reading.* FINLAYSON *jauntily lights his pipe beside the studio table. He takes his hat from the hall-stand, whistling cheerfully.*)

Finlayson—I'm going out a little while, Jane.

Jane—Yes? Very well. (*She gives a huge sigh.*)

Finlayson—Eh?

Jane—I'm thinking of poor, dear little Mrs. Perry. She's not strong, you know. A shock like that might be very bad for her.

Finlayson—Great Scott! I forgot all about her. (*He goes out hastily, C. E. to left.*)

(JANE *laughs, and goes out L.* BONG *enters, C. E. He looks about.* JANE *reënters, hastily putting on her hat and coat.*)

Jane—Turn down the lights, Bong; we're all out for awhile. (*She stands for a moment at the foot of the stairs, and listens.*) Poor little kiddie! (*She goes out C. E. to left.*)

(BONG *turns off the living-room lights. Loud cries are heard from* TAD *upstairs.*)

Tad (*Running downstairs, clad in pajamas, crying*)—Mommer-r-r! Popper-r-r-r!

Bong — Shuh! — Shuh! — Shuh!—Aplil Fools'! Aplil Fools'! (*He takes* TAD'S *hand.*) You likee pie? Huh? You likee pie?—Aplil Fools'!

(*He leads* TAD *off C. E. toward R.* TAD *is howling as the Curtain falls.*)

ACT II

SCENE: MRS. PERRY'S *sitting-room. The entrances are at center and right. The room is simply but cosily furnished. On the walls are a number of paintings and sketches, both framed and unframed.* MRS. PERRY *is discovered sitting beside the table lamp, busily tatting. She is elderly, quiet, and sweet-looking. She glances at the clock. It strikes eight. She murmurs to herself, counting: "One—two—three—four—five—loop, one—two—three——" The door-bell rings,* MRS PERRY *answers.*

(BEATRICE ALLEN *enters C. E., excitedly, hurriedly, followed by* MRS. PERRY.)

Mrs. Perry—Good-evening. What do you wish, please?

Beatrice—Is this Mrs. Perry? Yes, I thought so.

Mrs. Perry—Yes, I am Mrs. Perry. Do you wish to see my daughter?

Beatrice—Yes, Mrs. Perry, I do wish to see your daughter, but first I would like to talk with you.

Mrs. Perry (*Sweetly polite, but a trifle haughty*) —I don't know you, do I?

Beatrice—I beg your pardon; I am Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Edward Allen, you know.

Mrs. Perry—Oh, Mrs. Allen! Do sit down.

Of course I have heard of you often. Isabel is so fond of your dear little boy.

Beatrice (*Shortly*)—Yes, I believe so. (*She sits.*)

Mrs. Perry (*Sits down in her former chair, and resumes her tatting*)—Mr. Allen has been so kind to my Isabel. He and Mr. Finlayson——

Beatrice—Yes, I have heard of that too. In fact, it is just *that* I have come about.

Mrs. Perry—I don't understand you, Mrs. Allen. Suppose we wait until Isabel comes, then we can talk it over. Do you tat?

Beatrice—I wish to have a private talk with you before your daughter comes. Is she often as late as this.

Mrs. Perry—Yes, quite often. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three—four—five——

Beatrice—So I have heard. She seems to be a very *industrious* girl!

Mrs. Perry—There's no one like my Isabel. She works faithfully at whatever she undertakes.

Beatrice (*Sneeringly*)—Even if it makes her late for dinner, eh?

Mrs. Perry—Yes; but I always keep her dinner nice and hot for her in the fireless cooker.

Beatrice (*Walking about*)—Mrs. Perry, I have come here for your daughter's own good; to tell you things you ought to hear.

Mrs. Perry (*Nervously*)—I wish Isabel would come! (*Trying to be entertaining*) Have you seen those nice, little crash face towels? I am making this tatting for one of them.

Beatrice (*Nonplussed*)—Yes, I have seen them. I have made dozens of them.

Mrs. Perry—They are so handy. I am making a set for Isabel. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two——

Beatrice—Mrs. Perry, you ought to know what your daughter's practices are. (MRS. PERRY *is startled.*) I hate to startle you, but what am I to do? Your Isabel has been coming day after day to study art—oh, yes, art! (*She glances at the paintings on the walls.*) *Art,* mind you, with Rodney Finlayson!

Mrs. Perry (*With pride*)—Yes, that's true.

Beatrice—Well, how has she been spending that time? I want you to know!

Mrs. Perry (*Bewildered*)—My dear! I don't know. I wish you would wait till Isabel comes. She could tell you what you want to know, I am sure. Is it about your little boy you wish to speak? I know you wish her to look out for him a little when you are away from home.

Beatrice (*Impatiently*)—No, no! Though heaven knows what perfidy that child has heard!

Mrs. Perry — One — two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three——

Beatrice—You say your daughter is often late? Well, she stays to see my husband, Mrs. Perry—yes, *my husband!*

Mrs. Perry (*Becomes very dignified, and drops her tatting in her lap*)—Your husband! Explain yourself, Mrs. Allen.

Beatrice—All these afternoons when she has been "quite late," as you say, she has loitered around the

studio under pretense of painting, or looking after Tad, or copying letters for Rod Finlayson, and all the time it was my husband she was waiting for!

Mrs. Perry—Mrs. Allen! (*Rising solemnly*) You are a wicked woman. (*There is a sound of some one entering the hall.*) I hear my daughter coming. (*Going C. E.*) Isabel—Isabel, come in, dear. We have a visitor.

(ISABEL *and* PARKER *enter C. E.*)

Isabel—Why, Mrs. Allen! What an unexpected pleasure! (*She offers her hand, which* MRS. PERRY *intercepts by stepping up and kissing* ISABEL.) Have you met Mr. Parker? Mrs. Allen—Mr. Parker. (*They bow.*)

Parker—How are you, Mrs. Perry? (*They shake hands while* BEATRICE *and* ISABEL *eye each other.* PARKER *places his hat and overcoat aside.*)

Isabel—Mother has so often heard me speak of you, Mrs. Allen.

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—No doubt! It is time now to speak of *you!*

Isabel—Mrs. Allen! What has happened? (*She is taking off her jacket; it catches somewhere.*) Syd, please help me with this. (*As he helps her, the note which* ALLEN *has given her falls out of the pocket. She snatches at it;* PARKER *picks it up.* ISABEL *is confused.*) That's—er—oh, give it to me, Syd!

Beatrice (*Quickly*)—Kindly allow me to glance at that envelope, Mr. Parker. (ISABEL *demurs involuntarily.*) Oh, you needn't be afraid, Miss Perry, I'm not going to open it! (*She looks at the envelope in* PARKER'S *hand.*) I thought so! My husband's handwriting, Mr. Parker.

Parker—I must confess I don't understand what

this is all about. Will one of you kindly explain?

(*He gives* ISABEL *the letter, which she places, in dignified silence, in her jacket pocket, hastily removes her hat, and places both on a chair.*)

Mrs. Perry—Yes, please be good enough, Mrs. Allen. You began telling me something I cannot believe.

Beatrice—Oh, no, nobody ever believes these things! Yet the newspapers are full of them! I never thought they would happen to me, though; oh, I never, never did! (*Becoming hysterical*) How can you stand there, Isabel Perry, and look me in the face?

Isabel (*Amazed*)—Mrs. Allen! What do you mean? Sydney!

(PARKER *tries to break in; he is worried about the note, but* BEATRICE *continues.*)

Beatrice—This is what we women get for improving ourselves, and trying to make something of our lives. *You*—sweet, simple, little——

Mrs. Perry (*Taking* ISABEL'S *hand*)—Mrs. Allen, I forbid you to address my daughter in that tone. Kindly carry on your conversation with me.

Isabel—Mama, dear, I am quite able to talk.

Beatrice—What I have to say concerns all of you.

Mrs. Perry—I am waiting for you to tell me why you have come here to insult my daughter.

Isabel—Mother *dear!*

Mrs. Perry—Yes, *insult.* Oh, you don't know, my dear, what she has been saying! Well, Mrs. Allen?

Beatrice—I suppose you don't know, Miss Perry, that I am quite aware of your coming home late every evening—of your pretense of art—of your,

well, just ask Mr. Finlayson what he thinks about it—or ask Mr. Allen—yes, *just ask my husband!*

Isabel—I don't know what you mean. Did I neglect Tad? Has anything happened to him?

Mrs. Perry—Hush, my dear; let me speak. Kindly make your story short, Mrs. Allen. I am waiting.

Beatrice—My husband has had the effrontery this very evening to confess, no, not to confess, to brazenly proclaim, that you, *you,* Isabel Perry, are his choice for my successor!

Isabel (*Gasping*)—Mrs. Allen!

Mrs. Perry—Oh! Why—— (*Turning indignantly to* PARKER) How dare you allow this woman to remain in the same room with Isabel? (MRS. PERRY *begins to grow weak from agitation.*)

Isabel—Mother, Syd can do nothing. Let me manage this—this *crazy woman.* (PARKER *looks at her queerly.*) What is the matter, Sydney?

Parker—Isabel, this is certainly very strange. You are keeping something from me.

Isabel—Sydney!

Parker—All the way home you have treated me queerly.

Isabel—Why, Syd, surely you are mistaken! (MRS. PERRY *clutches her arm, and sways a little.*) Mother, you are tired. You must come and lie down. (*Guiding her to the door, R.,* MRS. PERRY *protesting.*) Perhaps Mrs. Allen and Mr. Parker can find a congenial topic of conversation until I return! (*She delivers this sentence with mild sarcasm, and goes out with* MRS. PERRY *R.*)

Beatrice (*Laughing wildly*)—No doubt we can!

Parker—This knocks me all out, Mrs. Allen. I don't know what to do or say.

Beatrice—You may be thankful that you are not married to Isabel. Look at me—tied up irrevocably!

Parker—I cannot believe it—yet—when I think of her strange actions this evening, that letter, and little Tad's warning about a secret!

Beatrice—Ah, yes, that secret! They evidently have a secret understanding.

Parker—It certainly looks like it.

Beatrice—Tell me just what happened. Were you at the house? Were they together?

Parker (*Solemnly*)—Yes.

Beatrice—Alone?

Parker—Your little Tad was there.

Beatrice—My innocent lamb! Where was Rod Finlayson?

Parker—I don't know. There was no sign of him around.

Beatrice—Well? Go on! Go on! Did you notice anything unusual?

Parker—Well, I must say that both your husband and Isabel seemed decidedly confused. My appearance on the scene evidently interrupted something.

Beatrice—And the letter—the letter! What about that?

Parker—I didn't attach any importance to the letter until she dropped it; but the glances they exchanged when they bade each other good-by were enough to——

Beatrice—Yes! And Taddy, *he* knew about the letter—*he* told me about it.

Parker—And he warned me not to ask about the secret!

Beatrice—It's all as plain as day! Oh—oh—oh!

(ISABEL *enters R. She stands looking at them.*)

Isabel—Well?

Beatrice—We were just wondering "well," also!

Isabel—Sydney! Surely you cannot believe any of this.

Parker—Well, Isabel, you know it *is* very strange that you have not allowed me to announce our engagement. Then tonight it was plain to be seen that you and Mr. Allen had an understanding of some sort. Even little Tad——

Beatrice (*Triumphantly*)—Yes, deny that, if you can! *Children* speak the truth!

Isabel—It is an old saying, yes, but you have left out part of it. (*Sarcastically*) Children repeat what they see without understanding; *fools* do the same.

Beatrice—So I am a fool, am I? I am beginning to think I am! Oh, how could I have been so dense! No wonder Ned has been getting home before me evening after evening, pretending I was late, and kicking up all sorts of a row, when all the time he was the one that was too early. Mr. Parker, what time was it when you arrived there?

Parker—I really don't know. About six-thirty, I think.

Isabel (*With a pointed look at* BEATRICE)—It was nearer seven.

Parker—Mr. Allen had evidently been home some time, and was enjoying himself hugely as far as I could see.

Isabel (*Much hurt*)—Very well, Sydney, if you

believe these things so easily, continue to believe them. Meanwhile I'll bid you both good-evening. Perhaps Mrs. Allen will enlighten you as to all the particulars on the way home; I am not conversant with them. Good-evening!

(*She starts out toward R. The doorbell rings, she answers, and ushers in* RODNEY FINLAYSON. *He is slightly out of breath, but debonair, as usual.*)

Isabel (*As they enter*)—Mr. Finlayson!

Beatrice—Rodney!

(PARKER *looks his surprise.*)

Finlayson—I am sure you are surprised at this unexpected call, Miss Perry, but I am a little bit of a "henian," as Tad says, and——

Isabel—"Henian?"

Finlayson—"Bohemian," is my pronunciation. Tad prefers the other. Hello, Bee, are you here? What a charming surprise! And Parker too! This is great. (*He takes off his overcoat and lays it nonchalantly aside with his hat.*)

Isabel—Was there something you wanted me to do for you?

Finlayson—Oh, no, no! Merely a social visit. I am a sociable being, as, no doubt you know.

Isabel (*Murmurs, not knowing what to do*)—You are always very kind.

Finlayson—Your mother is well, I hope.

Isabel—Not *very* well this evening. (*Glancing at the others*)

Finlayson—It was really solicitude for her that brought me. I was out, taking a little run around, so I dropped in to inquire. I suppose that is what Mrs. Allen came for, eh, Bee?

Beatrice (*Self-consciously*)—You are too absurd, Rodney. You know why I came.

Isabel—Mrs. Allen! Surely you——

Beatrice—I have accomplished my errand, and now if Mr. Parker will kindly call a taxi for me I shall not burden you with my society any longer. (*She turns to* PARKER *who assists her with her coat; she talking volubly.*)

Isabel—I have already said good-evening to you both.

Finlayson (*In a quick aside to* ISABEL)—Brace up! It's all a hoax. I started it. There's nothing to it.

Isabel—You—what?

Finlayson—What day of the month is this?

Isabel—The first of—oh, April Fools'!

Finlayson—Yes, I started Bee off; didn't think it would go so far. Shuh! It will be all right. Sense of humor, you know; sense of humor!

(ISABEL, *though still hurt at* PARKER, *follows* FINLAYSON'S *lead.*)

Beatrice (*C. E.*)—Good-evening.

Parker (*C. E.*)—Good-evening.

Isabel—Shall I see you later, Sydney?

Parker (*Stiffly*)—I believe you dismissed me some time ago.

Finlayson (*Gaily*)—By the way, I wonder what has become of Ned! He left home quite a while before I did, with one of his facetious remarks. He's always so apropos, is old Ned! I got an idea he was coming here.

Beatrice—No doubt he was. Shall we go, Mr. Parker? (*They go out C. E.*)

(*There is a ring at the doorbell.* ISABEL *starts toward C. E.* PARKER *has reached the house door, and opens it.* EDWARD ALLEN *enters. He is in a towering rage. His voice is heard from the hall, before he appears.*)

Allen—Oh, there you are, Mrs. Allen! I have come to take you home.

Beatrice (*Shrilly, in the hall*)—Have you indeed? Well, you might have spared yourself the trouble.

Isabel (*Looking out into the hall*)—Oh, please, please!

(ALLEN, BEATRICE *and* PARKER *appear C. E.*)

Parker (*Haughtily*)—I am about to escort Mrs. Allen home.

Allen—Who are you, I should like to know, that you should escort my wife home?

Parker—Who are *you,* I should like to know, that——

Finlayson (*Holding up his hand, drawling*)—Shuh—shuh! Come in, all of you. If you must fight it out, at least remember that you are ladies and gentlemen, and fight in the drawing-room where there is more floor space!

(*They reluctantly enter, glowering at each other. Curiosity brings* BEATRICE.)

Allen (*To* FINLAYSON)—What are *you* doing here?

Finlayson—I might ask that of you.

Allen—You didn't say that you were going out.

Finlayson—*You* told *me* you were going to bed!

Allen—So you meet Beatrice down here, do you?

Finlayson (*Amazed*)—Eh?

Allen—Just what I said. It's like your smoothness, getting me involved in a plot to cover your own underhand doings!

Finlayson—Well, of all the——! Great Scott—what a mess! Will you listen to me?

Allen (*Shouting*)—No, I won't listen to you! Beatrice, are you coming? What are you waiting for?

Beatrice (*Shrilly*)—No, I'm not coming with you. What do you take me for? Why should I come with you?

Allen—Why should you? I am your legal protector, amn't I? Can you beat it? "Why should you?"

Beatrice—Where have you been all this time then? I've been here at least half an hour. You haven't been in much of a hurry.

Allen—Could I help it if my taxi took the wheel off another car, and delayed all the traffic on the street? Could I help that, I say? Oh, yes, of course I could! There isn't anything that we men are not expected to do, from cooking a dinner to settling a traffic riot on Market Street!

Finlayson—My word, that's interesting! Isn't it queer how a man's wife is never with him in a taxi accident! What was her name, Ned?

Allen (*Blustering*)—B-r-r-r——! I've had just about enough from you.

Finlayson—Yet I am the only person who can set you right on this.

Allen (*Sneering*)—Sort of a Solomon, are you?

Finlayson—Come to think of it, Solomon and I *are* kindred spirits. *He* was a hopelessly married

man too! (*He sends a whimsical glance toward* BEATRICE. *She is self-conscious.*)

Parker (*Who has been trying to get in a word for some time*)—There is no further reason for my remaining here. Good-evening, Mrs. Allen. If at any time I can be of any assistance just let me know.

Beatrice—You are so kind!

(PARKER *goes out hurriedly, C. E., forgetting his overcoat.* BEATRICE *and* ALLEN *continue to argue aside.*)

Isabel—Sydney!

Finlayson—Let him go. He'll be back tomorrow —*if* you want him!

Isabel (*Indignantly*)—Of course I want him! But, oh, I am *mad* at him!

Finlayson—Naturally no girl cares for a lover who isn't able to hold his own.

Isabel—I *do* care for Syd. But he ought to have more faith in me.

Finlayson—He'll be around tomorrow, as meek as a lamb, you'll see! I promise you I'll spend all day straightening this thing out.

Allen—Once more, Mrs. Allen, are you coming?

Beatrice—*No*—and stop calling me Mrs. Allen!

Allen—I'll call you exactly what I damn please!

Beatrice (*Beginning to cry*)—O—o—oh! In all my life I've never been sworn at before!

Allen—It would have been better for you if you had! Damn, damn, *damn,* I say!

Finlayson—Ned! Ned! Kindly remember that you are not in the sanctity of your own home!

(ISABEL *approaches* ALLEN *protestingly. He calms down somewhat, and stands near C. E., look-*

ing commandingly at BEATRICE. *The telephone rings,* ISABEL *answers.*)

Isabel (*At telephone*)—Yes?—Who?—(*Puzzled*) Yes, this is Mrs. Perry's house.—I don't understand you. (*Hitting the phone*) That's better. *Whom* did you say?—What car?—(*Turning to the others*) I can't make out what he says; he sounds Dutch. (*To phone*) You take car 21, yes, to get here. (*To others*) Good gracious! I'm giving a strange man directions how to get here!—(*To phone*) Mrs. *Who?*—Mrs. *Finlayson?* (*All start*)—Oh, yes! To meet—Who is this, please?—*Who?—Oh!*—Very well. Good-by. (*She hangs up, and turns in amazement to* FINLAYSON.) It's Professor Staticmuller! He is coming here to meet Mrs. Finlayson. Did you ever? He's lost. He'll be here in a few minutes.

Finlayson—Well—what do you know about that? (*He sinks into a chair in amazement. The others show their astonishment.*)

Beatrice—Professor Staticmuller!

Allen—That settles it! I wait here for that scoundrel! (*He takes off his overcoat and sits down to wait.*)

Beatrice (*Looking at* FINLAYSON)—I think I'll go!

Finlayson—Don't hurry away on my account. I seem to be here for awhile; my wife may need a chaperone!

Isabel (*Spiritedly, with light sarcasm*)—Please make yourselves at home! My duty as hostess seems to have been quite taken out of my hands. I think I shall leave you to manage the rest of this affair as you consider best. (*The door R. suddenly*

opens, MRS. PERRY, *in dressing-gown and slippers, appears on the threshold.*) Mama! (ISABEL *runs to her.*)

Mrs. Perry—Did you call me, darling?

Isabel—Why, no, mama. Don't you think you'd better go back? (MRS. PERRY *insists upon coming in.* FINLAYSON *assists her to the couch.*) This is Mr. Finlayson, mama.

Mrs. Perry (*Surveying them all*)—Good-evening, Mr. Finlayson. Where is Sydney?

Isabel—He went away, mama.

Mrs. Perry—And you let him go?

Isabel—Certainly.

Finlayson (*Innocently*)—He is coming back tomorrow.

Mrs. Perry (*Looking at* ALLEN, *who has risen*)—Who is this gentleman?

Isabel—Excuse me, mama; this is Mr. Allen.

Allen (*Choking down his anger as best he can*)—Good-evening, Mrs. Perry; pleased to meet you.

Mrs. Perry—And I am particularly glad to meet you. Now, I advise you to take your wife home and have a little talk with her. She has been saying a great many things which are not true, and had much better be left unsaid.

Finlayson—Few women show discretion in their selection of things to be left unsaid.

Mrs. Perry—I think many of your sex have the same failing. (FINLAYSON *is abashed.*) Isabel, my tatting, please.

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—That is just what I think, Mrs. Perry! If you could have heard the things my husband said to me before I came here this evening! No wonder I was half-distracted.

Allen—There you go again! If that crazy Dutchman doesn't come soon, I'll go mad!

Mrs. Perry (*With a calming gesture*)—I am sorry to be inhospitable, but——

Isabel (*Softly*)—Mama! Don't you think you'd better go and get your dress on?

Mrs. Perry—My dear, there are other things more important than a suitable costume. My daughter's good name is one of them.

Finlayson (*Overcome with contrition*)—Mrs. Perry! What a confounded scoundrel I am! Let me explain how——

(*The doorbell rings.* ALL *start.*)

Beatrice—Professor Staticmuller!

(ISABEL *answers the bell.* FINLAYSON *sinks back into his chair resignedly.* ALLEN *adopts a "just let me at him!" attitude.* PARKER *enters C. E.*)

Finlayson—Oh! Sooner than I expected!

Parker (*Stiffly*)—I forgot my overcoat. I am going out of town tomorrow, I shall probably need it.

Isabel (*Handing it to him*)—Here it is.

Mrs. Perry—Sydney!

Parker—Yes, Mrs. Perry?

Mrs. Perry—A pleasant trip to you! Do you expect to be away long?

Parker (*Hesitating*)—My plans are rather uncertain. Business—er——

Mrs. Perry (*With quiet sarcasm*)—I often think how convenient "business" is!

Finlayson—Mrs. Perry! Business a convenience! You are unkind. Business! It is our cruel taskmaster; we are its slaves.

(ALLEN *grunts;* BEATRICE *makes a hysterical sound.*)

Mrs. Perry (*Calmly tatting*)—One—two—three—four—five—loop——. I never knew a man who was its unwilling slave any more than I am to this tatting shuttle! One—two—three—four—five—loop. I tat because I like to. You men engage in business because it is a fine, big, interesting game. If you didn't like it you would all be planting beans and potatoes in your back yards, and raising pigs and other food for your families.

Isabel—Mama!

Finlayson—Good! Back to the soil, I say! "In the beginning" God planted a garden, and all those things you mention must have been in it, Mrs. Perry, although the historian doesn't so state.

Allen (*Growling*)—There's a whole lot in that Garden of Eden story that we poor ginks are left to find out for ourselves.

Mrs. Perry (*Politely*)—I didn't hear you, Mr. Allen.

Finlayson—Allen is something of a pessimist, Mrs. Perry. Don't let him worry you.

(ALLEN *subsides.*)

Mrs. Perry (*Placidly*)—Oh, I never allow trifles to worry me! One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—— And my opinion of the relation of men to their business is of many years' standing, so he and Sydney do not bother me in the least. One—two—three——

Parker—I'm afraid I differ from you, Mrs. Perry; but I have no arguments ready. Good-night. (*He turns toward C. E.*)

Beatrice—Oh, Mr. Parker, if you are going my way, may I go with you?

Parker—Certainly, Mrs. Allen, with great pleasure. A little later I am going to drop in at the Indoor Yacht Club meeting.

Allen—Great Scott! I forgot all about that meeting!

Beatrice—Earlier in the evening that meeting was of the greatest importance, Mr. Parker; but even more important matters seem to have come up since then. Shall we go?

Parker (*All confusion*)—Certainly.

(ALLEN *starts after her.*)

Beatrice (*Witheringly*)—I believe you said you were anticipating meeting Professor Staticmuller. Don't let me take you away. Good-evening, everybody! (*She and* PARKER *go out C. E.*)

(ALLEN *looks about distractedly, then decides to remain, and bounces down again in a chair L.*)

Finlayson—How things do work around after all! Here we are, waiting as though it had all been prearranged, to meet the great apostle of freedom!

Mrs. Perry (*To* ISABEL)—Who is this they are speaking of, dear? Are you expecting someone?

Isabel—Oh, mama, it is most unexpected! For some reason, I don't know what, Mrs. Finlayson has directed Professor Staticmuller to meet her here. I suppose they will be here at any moment.

Finlayson—Great scheme of Jane's! Now we can plan that husbands' meeting! (ALLEN *shifts impatiently.*) Everything is working right to our hands, Ned.

Allen (*Growling*)—I don't know what you are talking about.

Mrs. Perry—Dear me! Another strange gentleman coming!

Isabel (*Meaningly*)—Perhaps it would be better for you to—er—eh?

Mrs. Perry—Yes, indeed, I must put on my dress again. (*She lays aside her tatting, and rises, with slight help from* ISABEL.)

Isabel—Will you excuse us for a few minutes, please? If the doorbell rings would one of you gentlemen kindly answer it?

Finlayson—With pleasure.

(ALLEN *nods abruptly.* MRS. PERRY *and* ISABEL *go out R. The two men shift about for a time without looking at each other, then gradually fix one another with a long stare.* FINLAYSON *goes off into a silent paroxysm of laughter.* ALLEN *mutters angrily.*)

Finlayson (*Breathless with laughter*)—See here, Ned!

Allen—Dry up!

Finlayson—But man, you're a fool! What do you think you're doing? Don't you know that——

Allen—I know that I've had enough of your tomfoolery.

Finlayson (*Innocently*)—I? Tomfoolery?

Allen—Yes—you, you—*you!*

(*The doorbell rings;* ALLEN *starts up, then checks himself, looking at* FINLAYSON.)

Finlayson (*Nonchalantly*)—After you! Don't let me deprive you!

Allen (*Savagely*)—Open the door! If *I* do I'll kick him downstairs!

(FINLAYSON. *with mock haste, goes to the front door. A high-pitched foreign voice is heard.*)

Voice—Mees Eesabel Perree? She lifs here?

Finlayson—Yes. Good-evening. Walk right in.

(PROFESSOR STATICMULLER *enters, followed by* FINLAYSON. *The* PROFESSOR *is tall and foreign-looking. One is not sure of his nationality. He may be German, he may be Polish. Most likely he is from Sweden. With rather pronounced, checked clothes he wears a soft, flowing necktie. His whiskers are long and aggressive; his eyes mild, evidently cultivating a "vision" of fifty years hence.*)

Professor S.—Ah, you are der broder off der young ladee, Miss Perree?

Finlayson (*Cheerfully*)—Oh, no! Only a family friend. Allow me to buttle for you.

Professor S. (*Puzzled*)—Eh? Vat's dat?

Finlayson—To buttle, to valet—hang it! What is it a footman does? At any rate, let me take your hat and coat. (*Taking the* PROFESSOR'S *coat*)

Professor S.—Oh, sairtainly, sairtainly! (*Taking off his overcoat*) How you Americans make der jokes! I do not der humor alvays onderstand.

Finlayson—No? Same here! (*Rattling on*) You have it then in your country.

Professor S.—Haf vat, Mistair——? Pardon, I haf not your name.

Finlayson—My name is Rodney Finlayson; yes, Finlayson is my humble patronymic. Allow me to introduce you to my friend, Allen. Mr. Allen, Professor Staticmuller.

(ALLEN *rises and nods forbiddingly.*)

Professor S.—How? You know my name already? How comes dat?

Finlayson—I happened to overhear Miss Perry say that she expected you this evening.

Professor S.—So? (*To* ALLEN) I haf pleasure in meeting you, Mistair Al*len*. Your name, it sounds to me familiare. Vere can I it haf heard? Somewhere, I am sure.

Allen (*Forcibly*)—And your name, Professor Staticmuller, is familiar to me, *very familiar*. I have been *anxious* to meet you.

Professor S.—So? Den ve are vell met. (*To* FINLAYSON) And you, Mistair? Your name also I haf many times heard. Feen-lay-son? Ah, I haf it! It iss dee Madame Feenlayson who so often to my classes comes, dat so charming ladee! Can it be you are der fortunate husband off dat ladee?

Finlayson (*Nodding meekly*)—I am he! (*He casts his eyes ecstatically heavenward.*) Also, I am to have the honor, if you remember, of painting your portrait.

Professor S.—But, of course! How stupid am I! But dere iss so much to remember, Mistair, so much!

Finlayson—Yes, I imagine so; especially when one remembers both backwards and forwards, as you do!

Professor S. (*Puzzled*)—Eh? (*To* ALLEN) And you? Ah, now I know! Dee charming little blonde ladee who with Madame Feenlayson so often comes! How stupid am I! You are der husband off dat so intelligent ladee, yes?

Allen (*Gruffly*)—My name is Edward Allen. Probably Mrs. Allen *has* attended some of your d—er—classes. As I said before, I have been waiting to meet you.

Professor S. (*Genially*)—Ah, dat iss very agreeable! Let us now make friends. I am already so

much der friend off dee so charming vifes. (*He seats himself, beaming.*)

Allen (*Menacingly*)—It all amounts to this. I'm not talking about making friends. I want to know what business you have going about telling foolish women what they are to do fifty years hence! *Now* is the time we've got to live, right *here* and *now*. While I am waiting for the next half century my meals are getting cold, and home is all going hang! (*The* PROFESSOR *rises in consternation, his mild eyes gradually becoming angry.*) It's Professor said this, and Professor said that, till I'm dead sick of the stuff. I've just been waiting to run into you to inform you that——

Finlayson (*Stepping between them*)—See here, Ned, see here! I must again remind you that you are not in your own home sanctum. You are in the house of two peace-loving, unprotected ladies who——

Professor S.—I do not onderstand dees, dees shentleman, Mistair Feenlayson. Vat does he mean?

(ALLEN *subsides, panting.*)

Finlayson—You must excuse his manner. When Ned becomes really interested in any subject he gets so excited that he forgets his manners. Now, he and I are interested; why, we are absorbed, *obsessed,* by this wonderful new doctrine of yours! It takes us right off our feet. We're all upset this evening over it. That's the reason we're here.

Professor S.—So? (*He looks suspiciously at* ALLEN.)

Allen (*Making a great effort to control himself*)—Yes, that's the reason we are here. I heard you were coming. I waited to meet you.

Professor S.—I do not know vy I am here. Miss Perree, iss she not home?

Finlayson—Yes, oh, yes! She will be here in a moment.

Professor S.—The so charming Madame Feenlayson, she haf invited me here to meet her. She haf not said dat you vere to be here. Perhaps it vas to surprise you dat——

Finlayson—Surprise! Yes, that's it, a surprise all round!

Professor S.—I haf so much hoped a meeding for der shentlemens to arrange; der husbands off dese so intelligent ladees. It iss not enough dat I gif to *dem* der new ideas, it is necessary dat der mens also shall dem hear.

Allen (*Gruffly*)—What are all these ideas? Why can't you tell them how to live right now?

Finlayson—Yes, why jump us ahead at such a rate? Life is speedy enough as it is.

Professor S.—Der Americain humor I do not onderstand qvick. Vat you mean—"speedy"?

Finlayson—I mean I want to live *right now;* I don't want to live fifty years from now.

Professor S.—Ah, now I onderstand! Dat iss vat der mens say, der—how you say? Der average mens, you call him. He stay here—(*indicating a certain spot on the floor*)—but dee ladees, ah Gott, dee ladees! Dey go so fast! I tell dem somedings, dey go—qvick—speedy! Dey believe—*dey do!*

Finlayson—Yes, but the thing is, don't you see? the average man wants the average woman to remain somewhere within shouting distance. What Mr. Allen means is, that if you speed the women

up to such an extent, we'll soon lose sight of them altogether, understand?

Professor S.—Lose sight? How you mean?

Finlayson (*Indicating the same spot that the* PROFESSOR *did on the floor*)—Well, here's the average man; that's *me*—or we might even say it was Ned Allen!

Allen (*Growling*)—You can leave me out of it.

Finlayson—Just as you say. Here's me, then, leading a nice, placid, comfortable life, unhampered by doubts or problems of the future, secure in the belief that Jane, although, of course, far above the average woman, is here beside me.

Professor S.—Jane? Vat iss Jane?

Finlayson—Jane is *who,* Meinherr Professor. Jane is Mrs. Feen—lay—son.

Professor S.—Oh! Pardon, Mr. Feenlayson!

Finlayson—Don't mention it! As I was saying, and more grammatically, here am *I,* and here also, presumably, is Jane. Suddenly I look up and discover Jane away over yonder. (*Indicating a distant spot*) I like existence right here—she likes it there. (*Shrugging enquiringly*) Now, what are you going to do about it?

Professor S.—Vat vill *I* do, Mistair? Dat iss not der question. Vat vill *you* do? She vill call, you vill go qvick, speedy also!

Finlayson (*Lazily*)—But I like it here, see? I *love it!* I'd rather call Jane back "qvick, speedy!"

Professor S. (*Smiling in a superior way*)—You are truly der average mens, Mistair Feenlayson. (*Turning to* ALLEN) And you—you t'ink dees vay also?

Allen—*Yes,* and your way is all foolishness,

damned foolishness, do you hear? (FINLAYSON *tries to restrain him without success.*) You're going around breaking up homes with your cursed philosophy. (*Indicating* FINLAYSON) Why, here's my best friend——

(ISABEL *enters R.* ALLEN *subsides.*)

Finlayson—Miss Perry, allow me to introduce my friend, Professor Staticmuller.

Isabel—I'm glad to meet you, Professor Staticmuller. Won't you sit down?

Professor S. (*Bowing*)—I am most happy, Mees Perree.

(ALL *sit.*)

Finlayson—The Professor says that Mrs. Finlayson has an appointment here with him. Such a natural, friendly little arrangement of Jane's! It's just my good luck to be here!

Professor S.—Myself, I hope it iss aboud der meeding she plans for der shentlemens.

Isabel (*Nervously*)—Yes, I think that must be it. Why not talk about it now, and have it all arranged before Mrs. Finlayson comes? It will be a nice surprise for her.

Professor S.—It vill do me great pleasure to so arrange, if der shentlemens——

Finlayson—I think we'd better wait. I never like to interfere with any of Jane's plans.

Professor S.—Ah, you see? Der very first step in der new régime—to interfere not!

Finlayson—But I never did. That's not new to me.

Professor S.—Den you haf my compliments. Dat iss vone great step in der new vay.

Finlayson—Oh, I like to keep step with the pro-

cession as much as anybody, and listen to the music of the band, even if there *is* a lot of brass about it! The trouble is, no one ever notices me in the crowd; I'm not spectacular enough.

Allen (*Growling*)—You can talk more nonsense in a minute than any fool I ever knew. Well, I don't seem to be advancing matters any toward that new period we're so much "obsessed" by, so I guess I'll go.

Professor S.—I am sorry. I fear you do not my object comprehend. I——

Isabel (*Going to* ALLEN)—Mr. Allen, I am so sorry all this incomprehensible mistake has occurred.

Allen—It's all a huge mess, Miss Perry. Why didn't you tell Sydney Parker right out about that note of recommendation?

Isabel—Sydney needs punishing. He was too ready to suspect me. Why, it's the most absurd thing! I can hardly believe it of him.

Allen—I can hardly believe it of *anybody*.

Isabel—Please go home and have a good talk with Mrs. Allen, and clear it all up. Mr. Finlayson can help you, I am sure.

Finlayson—Am I dismissed too? I have to wait for my wife. I can't see what she's doing all this time. I hope *she's* not holding up traffic!

Isabel—I'd much rather you would stay until she comes.

Professor S.—Trust Providence—she vill soon come.

Finlayson—Oh, it's all well enough to trust Providence, but there's no sense in Jane's putting herself in a hole for Providence to pull her out of!

Allen—That's the first sane speech out of your mouth tonight. Women are always getting themselves into holes, serenely banking on some masculine Providence to help them out!

Isabel—Oh, Mr. Allen, what an ungallant speech!

Allen—Well, it's true, with few exceptions, Miss Perry.

Professor S.—Dat iss vat ve discuss in dose so interesting meedings. Dee ladies, yes, yust now dey are so ovaircome mit der—der *entousiasm,* dey fall in dose holes of vich you truly speak. But dere vill come a change—fifty years hence——

(*There is an unintelligible growl from* ALLEN.)

Isabel (*Hastily*)—Yes, yes, times are changing rapidly. We all feel it—we——

Finlayson (*Solemnly*)—It is for this reason we men must not hold back. We are delaying traffic, spiritual and mental traffic, just as surely as your taxi wheel, by its obstinacy in holding onto—— (*He finishes with a cough, and goes into a paroxysm of silent laughter.*)

Allen—Oh, rot! I'm going, Miss Perry. I'm a bear—good-night. (*He starts for C. E. A loud ring is heard at the front door.*) Jane!

Isabel—It must be Mrs. Finlayson.

(*She goes out C. E. and re-enters, showing in* JANE. *The latter is suave and cordial, talking with* ISABEL *as she enters.*)

Jane—Why, yes, Miss Perry, I knew you would pardon this liberty of arranging a meeting at your house. I felt sure you would understand.

Isabel (*With meaning*)—Yes, indeed! There are *several* gentlemen waiting here to meet you!

Jane—Several? (*With pretended surprise*)—Why, Rodney! Whatever in the world! Well, I never! (*The* PROFESSOR *has risen ceremoniously.*) It was terribly good of you to give me some of your precious time, Professor; I appreciate it, I assure you. (*Shaking hands with him*) Well, Ned, I suppose it was to be expected to find you here, but I am so dense, I—er——

Isabel (*Haughtily*)—I believe you have some details to arrange with Professor Staticmuller about a meeting?

Jane—Yes, that is the object of my coming here. I knew Miss Perry would be interested; am I right? (*Cordially*) You have shown such aptitude in applying the rules of life which the dear Professor has been instilling into us the last few months, that I——

Isabel—In what way have I?

Allen—Oh, Lord, now the women are off!

Finlayson (*Interrupting*)—It was suggested that as several of the husbands supposedly interested in the proposed meeting were already providentially here, we might go ahead and arrange matters; but that would have been so contrary to the ways of *our* household, Jane, that I naturally felt a hesitancy about interfering with any of your plans. Incidentally I received a good mark in the Professor's books. How about that, Professor? Do you work on the honor system? Will I get a picture card or something before long, for credits?

Professor S. (*Utterly bewildered*)—Eh?—So? Indeed, yes, my picture, I haf forgot! It iss indeed an honor!

Jane—Don't be silly, Rod. May I sit down?

Miss Perry, do pardon my being the cause of all this fuss! I never dreamed of anything more than a cozy little chat, just the three of us!

Isabel—Certainly, Mrs. Finlayson. May I take your coat? (*She takes* JANE'S *coat and lays it aside.*) Will you excuse me a moment? (*She goes out R.*)

(ALL *sit except* ALLEN.)

Allen—I'd like to state right here that I'm not in sympathy with any movement that causes scenes such as occurred at my house this evening; and as far as Mrs. Allen and I are concerned, there shall be no more interest taken in it.

Jane—Speak for yourself, Ned; let Beatrice settle her own affairs.

Finlayson—Yes, don't hold up the traffic, Ned!

Allen (*Turning on him fiercely*)—Her affairs are mine.

Jane—Oh, I don't understand! I thought you had quite decided on a change.

Finlayson—So he has, Jane; but under the present law, you know, until——

Allen—No such thing! You know perfectly well that you, with your damned foolishness, caused all this——

Finlayson—Tut, tut, man, calm yourself!

Jane—Remember Mrs. Perry!

Professor S. (*Bewildered, and becoming impatient at the delay*)—Could ve not decide dat matter later, Madame, and arrange now our so important meeding?

Jane—Yes, let us settle that first. If we do decide on the change discussed earlier in the evening, this meeting is very important, because you men

must study the subject. Where and when, those are the first things to decide. Do sit down, Ned, and be quiet! (*Curiosity holds* ALLEN; *he sits.*) Let us have it as soon as possible.

Finlayson—That's what I say.

Jane—In a week or ten days at latest. I'll do a lot of telephoning, and I'll get some other women to help. I'd like to offer you the use of our, er—studio-living-room, but aside from its not being large enough to hold the crowd we hope to get together, there are other reasons. (*Consciously*)

Professor S.—A hall vould be der best for der crowd.

Finlayson—Oh, you expect a crowd, do you?

Professor S.—Indeed yes! Alvays dey crowd to der doors.

Jane—I should say they do! They stand in line——

Allen—A sucker having been born every minute!

Jane (*With a withering glance*)—And this being a husbands' meeting——

Finlayson—Is it to be strictly confined to legal escorts?

(ALLEN *grunts.*)

Jane—I should be more accurate. Let us call it a men's meeting; that is, especially planned for men, although all the women will be there.

Finlayson—*All* the women? Christopher!

Jane—Oh, you know what I mean! And if we find we are going to have too big a crowd some of the women can stay at home; but we want all the men.

Professor S. (*Complacently*)—Yes, all der mens. But, you, dear ladee, you must be dere.

Jane—Of course I shall have to be there, being, as it were, the manager. (*The* PROFESSOR *bows gallantly.*) Why, Professor, I was one of the very first in your classes here, wasn't I? I remember Mrs. Allen heard of you very soon after you arrived in town.

Professor S.—It vas indeed my very great pleasure to so soon meet Madame.

Jane—And now—just think! With the wonderful enlightenment you have given us we are able to face any emergency with advanced knowledge and courage.

Finlayson (*Beginning to be proud of* JANE)—I wish you'd told me something about these meetings before, Jane. We might have worked together along these lines, instead of secretly, blindly, as it were.

Jane—Very true, Rod; I wish I had. But we cannot turn back now; we *must go on;* isn't that so, Professor? (*He agrees.*) When we find out our mistakes we must immediately remedy them, if possible. Let yesterday be forgotten—all is change, change, change!

(FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN *watch her with growing astonishment.*)

Professor S. (*Mechanically*)—Indeed, yes! All iss change, change, change.

Jane—And in that change, Professor, in the so-called upward march of the human race, you have shown us that the NEW MAN and the NEW WOMAN are not now journeying along the same path, but——

Professor S. (*Eagerly*)—Yes, yes, it *iss so,* I said!

Jane (*Slanting the tips of her fingers together*)—They are climbing a mountain like this, on opposite sides, the majority of them. By and by they will meet again. Just now a few are journeying on together, like you and me, eh? seeing the new path, and trying to light the way for others!

Professor S.—Ve now see der new vay, you and I. Indeed, yes, ve hold her light on high!

Jane (*Striking a pose*)—"Liberty lighting the world!"

Professor S. (*Forgetting all about* FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN, *he approaches* JANE, *gesticulating as though on the lecture platform.*)—Ah, dear ladee, you so lif vat iss my ideal! Yes, noding but change! You are going on ahead, you, and *I!* It iss dee voman who vill lead. In her hand she holds all der years to come. Der man, he vill come after. Some time she vill need him—den, she peeck him up! Ven she not need him she vill—she vill put him down! He iss off small account in der grand scheme. She iss—how you say it?—der "whole show"!

Jane—Oh, Professor, Professor! The responsibility will be too great. The majority are not ready to take up this wonderful life.

Professor S.—Patience, my dear ladee! Vid such as you to lead, many vill soon be ready. (*He kisses her hand.*)

(ALLEN *and* FINLAYSON *are filled with consternation.* MRS. PERRY *and* ISABEL *enter R.* MRS. PERRY *is dressed as at first.*)

Isabel—Mother, this is Mrs. Finlayson.

Mrs. Perry—I am glad to meet you, Mrs. Fin-

layson. Of course I have often heard my daughter speak of you.

Jane—Yes, Mrs. Perry; and I of you. May I introduce Professor Staticmuller?

Professor S. (*Bowing low over* MRS. PERRY'S *hand*)—It iss my great pleasure, Madame, to meet you.

Mrs. Perry—Good-evening, Professor. You won't mind my not pronouncing your name, will you? I find foreign names very difficult to remember. Where did I leave my tatting, Isabel?

Professor S.—Sairtainly not, Madame. My name, it iss too long, I admit.

Isabel—Here it is, mama. (*Giving her mother the tatting*)

(MRS. PERRY *sits on the couch.*)

Professor S.—Dat vill be vone off der t'ings in der new life ve vill change—der too long vords, der too long names. Ve vill haf dem more short. It will make life more easy.

Isabel—Mother will thank you for that, at least, Professor. It is very difficult for her to remember names. (*Turning to* JANE) Well, have you come to any conclusion about your meeting? Couldn't I help you get out your notices?

Finlayson (*Aside to* ALLEN)—She's a good sport. (ALLEN *grunts.*)

Jane—Oh, I couldn't think of troubling you! Your time is full enough as it is.

Isabel—I'll have my typewriter brought home tomorrow, so I shall be able to write some notices for you very easily.

Jane—Have your typewriter brought home!

Why, what will Mr. Finlayson do without you? Rod, do you hear that?

Finlayson—Yes, it's percolating. I hope Isabel doesn't mean that.

Allen—See here, Miss Perry, I protest!

Isabel—There is nothing else to be done after this evening's conversation.

Mrs. Perry—I prefer that my daughter should discontinue the regular hours spent in your household, Mr.—er—Mr.——

Isabel—Finlayson, mama.

Mrs. Perry—Finlayson. She may take orders for work at home. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two——

(ALLEN *shifts about uneasily.*)

Finlayson—But your art lessons, you must not give up those.

(ISABEL *shrugs deprecatingly.*)

Mrs. Perry—My daughter will have something more important than art to consider in the next few months. One—two—three—four—five—loop. (*Turning to the* PROFESSOR) She is about to be married.

Isabel—Mama! Professor Staticmuller is not interested in our affairs.

Professor S.—Indeed yes! Your affairs to me mean life. All iss off interest. It comes—it goes—all iss change.

Mrs. Perry—I suppose the Professor *is* a very busy man. My daughter tells me you are a lecturer. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three——

Professor S.—Yes, Madame, dat iss my so humble occupation.

Mrs. Perry—That must be very interesting. Have you any special topic?

Professor S.—Madame, my subject comes at der time I speak. Anyt'ing and eferyt'ing iss my topeec. Today I say vone t'ing, tomorrow it iss all changed. Feefty years from now——

Finlayson (*Sauntering up to him*)—That little word "change" appears to be the keynote of your whole subject, Professor.

Jane—Shuh! I'm sure the Professor is in a hurry, Rod; and we haven't yet decided on the time and place. Suppose we say a week from Monday evening? (*The* PROFESSOR *consults his note-book, and nods.*) There's never much going on, on a Monday.

Mrs. Perry—When I was a girl we were always rather tired on a Monday evening somehow. One—two—three——

Finlayson—Sort of "pick-up day after Sunday," I suppose?

Mrs. Perry (*Pleased*)—Yes, and then the washing.

Isabel—Mother, dear, times have changed since then.

Finlayson—Changed indeed! (*Descriptively*) Nowadays a pair of silk stockings on the radiator, a pocket handkerchief or two on the window-pane—(*airily*)—there you are! The rest to Japan—or France!

Jane—Rodney! I *wish* you would keep quiet!

Finlayson—My dear Jane, *I* didn't begin it. (*He continues talking with* MRS. PERRY.)

Professor S. (*Bewildered*)—Yes, all—all iss change.

Allen (*Aside to* JANE)—Say, can't that chump say anything else?

Jane—You and Rod are both so impatient. You're in great need of the chastening influence of this very meeting we are planning.

Allen—Then, for heaven's sake, get it planned!

Jane—One week from Monday, then, Professor. And about the place, I don't believe the present hall will be large enough, do you?

Professor S.—I fear not indeed.

Jane—I shall just have to go about and look at a few halls, because on such short notice we may have trouble finding one. (*They continue aside.*)

Allen (*To* ISABEL, *indicating* JANE and the PROFESSOR)—Believe *me,* this sort of thing won't get any help from me. Now, once more, I'm going. Don't stop me!

Isabel (*Teasing*)—To the important meeting?

Allen (*Gruffly*)—Yes. I've missed the directors' meeting, but I guess I'd better put in an appearance at the rest of it. Good-night, folks. Mrs. Perry, I——

Jane—Oh, wait a minute Ned, it's all arranged! I'm going now with Professor Staticmuller down to the hall. My choice is made, but I must make some arrangements.

Professor S.—Yes, the choice of Madame Feenlayson iss made. (*Bowing to* MRS. PERRY *and* ISABEL) Ladees, I salute you. My very good-night.

Mrs. Perry
Isabel } Good-night.

Finlayson—I hope you've made a good choice of

a hall. Those draughty old séance places don't appeal to me.

Jane—Our choice is always a wise one, isn't it, Professor? (*Holding out her coat for him to assist her*)

Professor S. (*Assisting her*)—Indeed, yes, Madame. Your choice is mine. (*He bows elaborately.*)

Jane—In matters more important than halls, is it not?

Professor S. (*Floridly*)—In all matters, Madame. (*Holding open the door*) After you, Madame.

Jane—No, I believe your overcoat is in the hall. Will you get it? I will follow. Please hurry! (*He goes out C. E.*) One last word, good people. (*Addressing* FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN *pointedly*) "All is change, change, change," as my dear Professor says. (*Quoting gaily*) "I hold the future in my hand. I lead, he will follow!" Perhaps it will surprise you, but because I am the last of our quartette to divulge my plans, is no reason that I have not fully decided on them. (*Looking out into the hall admiringly, then at* FINLAYSON) The Professor, apostle of the new era, is *my next choice!* (*Carelessly*) I'll be home in an hour or so to talk it over. Good-by now. Ready, Professor? (*She goes out, smiling.*)

(*The front door is heard to close. The* TWO MEN *look at each other, aghast.* ISABEL *and* MRS. PERRY *are bewildered.* FINLAYSON *starts toward C. E.* ALLEN *looks at him, then dashes out into the hall.* ISABEL *goes to the door C. then looks back at* FINLAYSON.)

Isabel—What *did* she mean?

Finlayson (*All his gay humor gone*)—God knows!

Allen (*Heard shouting from the front door*)—Jane!—Jane!

Finlayson (*Going to C. E.*)—Ned! Quit that! You won't do any good with all that noise. You'll have an officer here.

Allen (*Returning excitedly*)—Well, what's the matter with the world anyhow! Everything has gone wrong from the minute I entered my own door tonight.

Isabel (*Gravely*)—I think it began to go wrong earlier than that.

Mrs. Perry—I don't know what you are all talking about. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three——

(FINLAYSON *is completely dazed. He sits L.*)

Allen—It's a rotten world, Mrs. Perry, if you'll excuse my English! See here, Fin, old man, that's all just a nightmare. (*Jerking his thumb toward C. E.*) That can't be real, you know.

Finlayson—Then I wish you'd waken me. (*Rising and staggering slightly*) I must go after her. (ALLEN *catches hold of him.*) Here, let me go, Ned!

Allen—If anybody goes, I do! You weren't born to fight, Fin. If there's any smashing to be done, let me tend to it!

Isabel—Couldn't it be—don't you think it's all a joke?

Finlayson—No, Jane's too serious for that. I never knew her to jest about such matters. That

scoundrel has turned her head. But Jane—*Jane!* And that—er—that—(*Smiting his chest*) Do I—*I*—seem to you the inferior of that—that—Oh, *Christopher!* (*He sinks back in his chair.*)

Mrs. Perry (*Going to him hurriedly*)—I'm afraid you are ill, Mr.—er——?

Finlayson (*Smiling ruefully up at her*)—*Fool*ingson, Mrs. Perry. Did you ever see a double-dyed idiot? Here's one!

Mrs. Perry—Oh, I'm sure you underrate yourself, Mr. Foo——

Isabel—Finlayson, mama.

Mrs. Perry—Perhaps a little of your hot coffee, Isabel, might be good for him.

Isabel—Yes, shall I——?

Allen—Take some, Fin.

Finlayson—Nonsense! I'm all right. Thanks just the same. I'll toddle along in a few minutes and be ready for them when they come home.

(*The telephone rings;* ISABEL *answers.*)

Isabel (*At phone*)—Hello!—Yes, this is Oak 1259—*What?*—Why, yes, bring her right up here again.—Oh, I'm so sorry! Good-by. (*She hangs up.*) Another mishap! That was Sydney. He says Mrs. Allen has turned her ankle, and is in great pain. He thought he would better bring her back here; it's nearer than going home.

Allen—Damn! (*He goes out C. E.*)

Finlayson (*Listlessly, still lying back in his chair*)—I suppose she got into one of those "Providential holes!" Where are they?

Isabel—Just down at the corner. They've been a long time getting there!

Finlayson—Well, of all the chumps, we're the limit! Coming here and upsetting your peaceful home like this!

Mrs. Perry (*Reseating herself on the couch*)—Oh, don't worry about that! Isabel, you'd better look up some bandages, and see if we have some liniment.

Isabel—Yes, indeed. (*She goes out R.*)

Finlayson—Ned shouldn't bring her in here. He should get her into a taxi and take her right home, or into the nearest drug-store; but when Ned loses his head there's no telling what he will do.

Mrs. Perry (*Philosophically*)—They are all about alike, I find!

Finlayson—Same old Adam, eh, Mrs. Perry, whether this fifty years or next?

Mrs. Perry—Yes. Besides, there *are* no taxis, or drug-stores, either, in this immediate neighborhood. One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three——Oh, dear me! I've knotted my thread! (*She becomes absorbed in disentangling it.*)

Finlayson—What a tragedy!

(ISABEL *enters R. with bandages, cotton, liniment, et cetera.*)

Isabel—I haven't much on hand, and I'm not a trained nurse. Don't you think we'd better telephone for a doctor?

Finlayson—No, indeed! I protest. We have already disturbed you enough. I shall insist on Ned's taking her home as soon as we have made her comfortable. If I hadn't been so dazed when the telephone call came I would have gone right off with Ned.

Isabel (*Timidly*)—I wish I could do something for *you,* Mr. Finlayson. I—I—don't know what to say.

Finlayson—Never mind, I know you're a good friend. I'm simply all in. I don't know what to think.

Isabel—I'm sure there's a mistake somewhere, although—it certainly looked——

Finlayson (*Forlornly*)—Yes, it did! It strikes me all of a heap. I've taken things too much for granted; this is my reward.

Mrs. Perry (*Who has been deep in the untying of the knot, but has succeeded*)—One—two—three—four—five—loop. I don't understand why your wife left so hurriedly, Mr. Fin—Finlayson.

Finlayson (*Pacing up and down*)—Neither do I, Mrs. Perry.

Mrs. Perry—Young women are very independent nowadays. I do not pretend to understand them. It was all so different when I was a girl. I fear I belong to another age.

Isabel (*At the table, making the cotton into little pads*)—Now you have mother started on her favorite topic, Mr. Finlayson. (*There is a ring at the doorbell.*) Here they are!

Finlayson—Let me go. (*He goes out C. E. Several persons are heard to enter the hall.* FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN *come in, supporting* BEATRICE, *who is moaning.*)

Mrs. Perry—Put her right here on the couch. There—there! I'm sure it hurts very much.

Beatrice—Oh!—Ouch! Boys, walk slower! *Ouch!* Ned, *don't!* Can't you see you're killing me?

Allen (*Much troubled*)—Yes, deary. There now—there you are!

(BEATRICE *sinks down on the couch.*)

Finlayson—Brace up, Bee. It may not be so bad.

Beatrice (*Clutching his hand, and holding it*)—Oh, Rodney!

Finlayson (*Very uncomfortable*)—It's all right, Bee; it's all right.

Beatrice—No it isn't. Oh—Oh—everything's all wrong!

Finlayson—I agree with you, but howling doesn't help matters. Seems to be a habit in your family, to shriek over everything.

Beatrice—I'll—I'll try not to—if *you* ask me not to!

Allen (*Turning away abruptly, to* ISABEL)—May I use your phone?

Isabel—Certainly.

Mrs. Perry (*At back of couch, holding* BEATRICE'S *hand*)—Come Isabel, loosen her shoe. That will relieve her.

(ISABEL *starts to comply.*)

Allen (*At the telephone*)—Hello!—Give me Pine 3258—Hello! Taxi cabs? Send me a machine right away. To—er—(*To* ISABEL) Say, what's the number here?

(ISABEL *hastens to him; their voices drop.*)

Beatrice (*To* MRS. PERRY)—Oh, make them both stay away! I just want you and Rodney!

Mrs. Perry—Why, my dear, surely your husband is the proper person to——

Finlayson (*Quietly, beginning to unlace one of* BEATRICE'S *shoes*)—Here's where I shine as a shoe

expert. Ahem! These are too close a fit, Madame. Now, if you had come to me in the first place—I would have recommended a longer shoe, and possibly one a trifle wider.

Mrs. Perry—Why, I thought you were an artist, Mr. Finlayson!

Finlayson—Does anything make you doubt it, Mrs. Perry?

Mrs. Perry—I'm sure you talk just like a shoe-clerk.

Isabel (*Inclined to laugh*)—Mama!

Allen (*Determinedly pushing* FINLAYSON *aside*)—Sorry to disturb you, Fin, but this is my job. (*From now on surprise helps* BEATRICE *to forget her ankle, which is not badly sprained after all.* ALLEN *removes her shoe.*) Good Lord, these high-heeled freaks! No wonder they threw you.

Beatrice—Ouch!

Mrs. Perry—There—there! Isabel, run and get my salts off the bureau.

(ISABEL *goes out R. and returns with the salts.*)

Allen—We're not going to put these people to any more trouble than we can help. Just let me have some of that cloth—bandage, whatever you call it, Miss Perry. We'll wrap it around this injured member to keep it warm, and wait till we get home to fix it up.

Isabel—I have liniment right here, Mr. Allen.

Allen—You're very good, but we've already bothered you enough.

Finlayson—This is one of the moments which puts one's sense of humor to the test.

(ISABEL *is overcome with half-hysterical giggling.*)

Beatrice—What's the matter? (*Looking about vaguely*) Where is Mr. Parker? Didn't he come in?

Allen (*Shortly*)—No! He suddenly remembered another engagement. He seemed only too glad to beat it. There now! (*Tying the bandage with a flourish*) That's all right. Feel pretty good now?

Beatrice (*Nods mournfully*)—Yes, I—I—think so.

Allen—Well, keep on thinking so, old lady! What's the matter with your think-tank? Start it working!

Beatrice—It's all very well for *you* to talk when you're quite comfortable!

Mrs. Perry—I don't understand how the accident happened. You were near here?

Beatrice (*Breathlessly*)—Yes! We started to walk home, and—and we stopped over there in the park, and sat on a bench to talk things over.

Finlayson—An extremely dangerous proceeding! Park benches are known to throw persons on the slightest provocation!

Beatrice (*With a withering look*)—We were talking, as I said, and—and—(*with a defiant look at* ALLEN) I was sitting on my foot, as I often do, and when I got up—oh, dear, there's another twinge!

Allen—Well, if your Professor *Statistician* could eliminate that habit, I'd take off my hat to him!

Beatrice (*Half sobbing*)—You're just as mean as you can be! (*Squeezing her damp handkerchief, and looking about for someone*) Where is Jane?

Mrs. Perry—Dear me, I must lend you a clean handkerchief! (*She goes out hastily R.*)

Beatrice—If you *would* be so kind!—I said, *where* is Jane? I thought you expected her here.

(ALL *look at each other.*)

Allen—Jane? Oh, yes, she was here!

Isabel—She's gone.

Beatrice—Well, she was in a great hurry! (*Looking from one to the other*) What's the matter? What makes you all so queer? You're keeping something from me.

Allen—Well—the truth is—er, shall I tell her, Fin?

Finlayson (*With his back to them, teetering back and forth*)—Oh, yes, spit it out!

Allen (*Excitedly, but careful, at the same time, of* BEATRICE'S *feelings*)—She's gone off with that blooming Professor of yours. That's what she's done.

Beatrice (*Aghast*)—Not Jane?—*Jane?*

Allen—Yes, *Jane!* She stood right there in that doorway, and told us he was her choice, not fifteen minutes ago. Now come along home!

Mrs. Perry (*Entering with a clean handkerchief*)—Here's a nice, clean handkerchief for you, my dear, and I put just a dash of violet on it.

Beatrice (*Completely dazed*)—Thank you—*Jane!*

Mrs. Perry (*Surprised, to the others*)—She's a bit upset, a trifle hysterical, I suspect. You'd best get her to bed as soon as possible.

(*A taxi horn is heard outside.*)

Allen—There we are! Come along, Fin; give us a hand, will you? (*They assist* BEATRICE. *She*

is so overcome by surprise that pain seems to have left her.) Easy now! All right, Bee? (*She nods.*) Aren't you going to say good-night to these kind ladies?

Beatrice (*Faintly*)—Good-night. Thank you.

(MRS. PERRY *and* ISABEL *follow them to the door, C.*)

Mrs. Perry—Good-night. I do hope it isn't serious.

Allen (*Airily*)—Oh, she'll be all right after a good night's sleep!

Beatrice (*Indignantly*)—Ouch! Oh, do be careful, Ned! I'm sure I'm in for a siege.

Allen (*Abruptly*)—A thousand thanks to you, ladies. Good-night.

(*He picks* BEATRICE *up in his arms and carries her out moaning.*)

Finlayson (*Indicating the departing couple*)—Between you and Providence you've pulled them out of a hole.

Isabel (*Holding out her hand to him*)—Good-night. And don't forget the advice you gave me earlier in the evening, "sense of humor, you know; sense of humor!"

Finlayson (*Shaking her hand*)—I *need it!* Good-night. (*He goes out C. E.*)

(ISABEL *follows him into the hall. The outer door is heard to close.* MRS. PERRY *goes out C. to right.*)

Isabel (*Re-entering, goes slowly to the couch, and sits, looking reflectively into space, murmurs*)—"A sense of humor?" Is it worth it? "A sense of humor?"

(MRS. PERRY *enters C. carrying a small tray holding* ISABEL'S *dinner.*)

Mrs. Perry—Here's your dinner, dear.

Isabel (*Springing up*)—Oh mother, why will you spoil me so? (*She brings a tiny table, places it near the couch;* MRS. PERRY *puts the tray upon it. They sit.*)

Mrs. Perry—Well, I'd like to know who would if I didn't! (ISABEL *slowly begins to eat.* MRS. PERRY *resumes her tatting.*) One—two—three—four—five—loop. One—two—three——

Isabel (*Impulsively*)—Oh, mother *dear!* If *that* is marriage, I don't think I'll try it!

(*They are in each other's arms as the Curtain falls.*)

ACT III

SCENE: *The same as Act 1, ten minutes later.* TAD *is discovered curled up on the couch R., asleep. He is barefoot, and in pajamas. Every now and then a sob escapes him. Beside him on the couch are a woman's nightgown, a man's suit of pajamas, some books, newspapers, sticks, stones, several bricks and other miscellaneous articles which he has evidently gathered together.* BONG *is seen to go upstair, then descend again rapidly, enter the living-room, look about. When he sees* TAD *he gives a gesture and grunt of relief.* TAD *is disturbed, wakens, and begins to cry.*)

Bong—Aw, what maller you? You no cly.

Tad—Mama! Mommer-r-r-r!

Bong—She no home. She come soon. You come upstairs, allee same go bed. Your mama, she come soon.

Tad—I'm co-o-old—boo-hoo! I want my daddy and my mommer-r-r!

Bong—You stop cly. I get bad man after you, he kill you!

Tad—Oh, I'll be good, I'll be good!

Bong (*Noticing the articles on the couch*)—What you do? What for you bling all stones, sticks——

Tad (*Becoming interested*) — Shuh! You mustn't tell! I'm playing a game—it's a awful nice game.

Bong—Aw, what you mean, *game?* I throw 'em away—no good! (*He begins to gather up the articles.*)

Tad (*Howling*)—No—no! You leave them be! I want 'em. You stop, you bad old Bong!

Bong—Aw, what maller you? (*Dropping the articles*) What you want?

Tad (*Sobbing*)—I'll—I'll only be good—if you'll give me another piece of pie.

Bong—Your mama, she say, no more pie. You ve'y bad boy.

Tad—I will be bad!—I will cry!—I will have some pie!

Bong (*Relenting*)—You be ve'y good boy, I give you some pie?

Tad (*With huge sobs*)—Yes.

Bong—Allight. I give you small piece pie.

(BONG *goes out C.* TAD, *still sobbing, jumps off the couch, and laboriously ties knots in the sleeves of the pajama coat and the nightgown. Then he gathers up as many of the articles as he can carry, and hurries off with them L. into the* FINLAYSONS' *apartment.*

BONG *re-enters with a slice of pie and a fork on a plate. He looks about for* TAD.)

Bong—Here, you Taddy-boy! Where you go? Taddy! Taddy!

Tad (*Running in L.*)—Here I am! Where's my pie? (*Jumping up on the couch, and seizing the pie*) Oh, goody, goody! (*He begins to devour the pie, holding it in his two hands.*)

Bong (*Offering him the plate and fork*)—Here —your mama, she like gen'leman.

Tad—I ain't going to be no gemplum; they don't have no fun. I'm a henian.

Bong (*Sadly*)—Aw, I t'ink you ve'y bad boy. Bad man, he catch you, I t'ink. You go upstairs, go bed.

Tad—Yes, I'm going soon; I'm very busy now. (*Stuffing the last bit of pie*) Have you got any more pie?

Bong—What for you want?

Tad (*Evasively*)—Oh, I don't want to eat any more! I don't like stomach-ache any more than you do. I just thought—(*confidentially*)—say, Bong, do you know what's a apple-pie bed?

Bong—Bed? What bed?

Tad—*Apple-pie* bed. Did you ever see one?

Bong—Aw, I no know. What you talk? Allee same clazy boy. You go bed.

Tad (*Much worried*)—Is the apple-pie bed a *real* one?

Bong—Aw, yes, leal apple-pie! I got 'em for tomollow dinner, ve'y nice, two apple-pie.

Tad (*Alert*)—*Two* pies?

Bong—Yes, allee same one-two. Now you go bed!

Tad (*Softly*)—Goody! Goody! (*With a lordly gesture to Bong*) Take away the plate and fork, Bong, old man; I'm soon going to bed, but I ain't sleepy now.

(Bong *reluctantly goes out C. with the plate and fork.* Tad *hurriedly puts some of the sticks and other articles under the couch, then starts off L. with the nightgown, pajamas, and the rest. The*

door-bell rings while he runs, causing him to trip and fall. He jumps up again, and goes out L.

BONG *answers the doorbell, and admits* BEATRICE, FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN. *The two men support* BEATRICE. *They seat her on the couch while she gives forth various little moans and impatient sounds.*)

Allen—There, now you're all right, eh?

Beatrice (*Crossly*)—I don't believe it's a bad sprain at all. It's just my nerves, all unstrung by what I've been through this evening.

Finlayson—And it's all my fault, Bee. I hope you'll forgive my fool joke.

Beatrice—Joke?—What joke?

Allen—That's what I say! It didn't strike me as much of a joke.

Finlayson—I guess a sense of humor can be over-cultivated. I think I'll drop it.

Beatrice—I don't know what you're talking about—but you've been—*queer,* all evening! (*Taking off her hat and coat,* ALLEN *assisting her*)

Finlayson—An over-cultivated sense of humor blinds one to the truth. Here I've gone along thinking life was a joke. Jane knows it isn't; she takes it seriously. Now see what she's done! (*He sits dejectedly by the studio table.*)

Beatrice—I can't believe it of Jane—*Jane,* of all people! Here I've gone placidly along, never suspecting a thing!

Finlayson—Why should you? Suspicion disposes kings to tyranny, husbands to jealousy—and wives—heaven knows!

Beatrice—But Jane is my friend. We've told each other everything lately—I don't see——

Finlayson—I don't either!

Beatrice—Don't what?

Finlayson—Don't see how you do it, you women! It's true—you *are* living all over the century at once!

Allen (*Standing C. scratching his head perplexedly*)—About a century ago I came home in the devil of a hurry to get out to a meeting. Did I have any dinner? I can't remember.

Beatrice—How can you stand there and talk about dinner, when poor Rod is in such dreadful trouble?

Allen—Seems to me, only a short time ago, you thought you were in trouble too.

Beatrice (*Indignantly*)—Whatever made you tell me such an awful, downright lie?

Finlayson (*Without changing his forlorn attitude*)—Is one lie any downrighter than another?

Beatrice—Yes, some are!

Allen (*Turning on him excitedly*)—I tell you it wasn't a joke to me! It was an infernal thing to do—and you see where it has landed us!

Finlayson—Where do you get that "us"?

Allen—Well, I guess it's been "us" all evening, hasn't it, until right now? Whose fault is it that your boomerang has come back with some speed, and floored you?

(TAD *is seen to peer out of door L. then hastily to shut it.*)

Beatrice—Ned Allen, there's no need of your adopting that high and mighty air. If you hadn't come in as cross as a bear, it never would have happened. We were all so happy!

Allen—Well—can you beat that? Where were

you, I'd like to know, when I did come home? Gadding about——

Finlayson—I thought you'd settled all that in the machine, you two. (*With a wide sweep of his hand*) Now just forget it!—Where's Tad?

Beatrice—Tad?

Finlayson—Yes, *Tad!* Why don't you give a little time and thought to the real things?

Tad (*Running in*)—Here I am! (*He swings joyfully on* ALLEN'S *arm.*)

Allen—Hullo, there! What are you doing down here, you monkey?

Beatrice—Taddy! Whatever in the world?

Tad (*Running to his mother, noticing her foot*)—Oh, mama! Deary! Deary! What's the matter with your poor footie?

Allen—Mother twisted her ankle, Taddy-boy. You'd best go upstairs, Bee, and get it fixed up properly. As long as you won't have a doctor, get to bed and rest it anyway.

Beatrice (*Carelessly*)—Oh, it's all right! I scarcely feel it at all. Taddy, mother's boy, what do you mean, staying down here so late? And bare feet? (*Feeling them*) And so cold! (TAD *giggles.*) I'm afraid you're very naughty!

Tad—No, I'm not. *Truly,* mama! I was zist as good! (BONG *comes in C. E.*) Wasn't I good, Bong?

Bong (*Solemnly*)—Taddy, he ve'y good boy. He just come li'l while.

Tad—Mama, I'm not a bit tired. Couldn't I help Bong? A tiny, tiny bit?

Beatrice—Bong is all through with his work by now, dear. You all finished, Bong?

Bong—L'il more. I mix bread.

Tad—Oh, mama! Let me help. Please—please!

Beatrice—All right, if Bong is willing.

Bong (*Imperturbably*)—Allight.

(TAD *jumps up and down ecstatically.*)

Beatrice—Run upstairs first, and put on your warm slippers and bathrobe.

Tad—Over my 'jamas, mama?

Beatrice—Of course. Hurry! It's a wonder if you haven't caught your death of cold.

Tad (*Joyously*)—An' make little biscuits in a little pan, mama?

Beatrice—Yes, just this once, remember! Now run along.

(TAD *and* BONG *go out C. E., the former chattering excitedly about the "little biscuits in the little pan." He runs upstairs, while* BONG *goes R.*)

Allen—Is the boy to stay up all night, Beatrice?

Beatrice—"All night!" How you exaggerate, Ned!

Allen—I don't know what you call exaggeration. The child has already missed two good hours of his sleep.

Beatrice—It won't hurt him for once.

Finlayson—Have you ever noticed that word "exaggeration," Ned? It stands for something which when applied to us mere males is an approbrious epithet. The prefix f-e turns the use of it gloriously into the superlative degree.

Allen—No, I never have!

Finlayson—It's one of the exceptions that grammar never attempted to explain.

Allen—I never had any use for grammar. See

here, man, what are you going to do? Don't sit there mooning over parts of speech.

Finlayson—What *can* I do? I'm waiting for Jane. Seems to me, just after the universe tumbled, she said she was coming home in a little while to talk it over.

Beatrice—So she did! And there's so much to talk over. (*Looking about the room*) Our furniture and everything has got so mixed up.

Finlayson—Furniture? What's that got to do with it?

Allen—For heaven's sake, Bee, is that all you see in it?

Beatrice—Of, course not; there's lots more, but you know perfectly well that I always have to say what comes into my mind first.

Allen (*Beginning to untie one of his shoes*)—Unfortunately, yes; that seems to be your system.

(TAD *runs downstairs and disappears R.*)

Finlayson—It's a good system; I wish I had it! So often what comes into my mind first is the very last thing I would say; so I tuck it away in some subconscious corner, and the world loses a valuable truth. That's what I like about Bee. (BEATRICE, *self-conscious.*) She never tucks anything away. Now, if she thinks it's all a matter of furniture and other material things between Jane and me, why shouldn't she say so and be done with it?

Beatrice (*Protesting*)—I never thought so at all, Rod! Until you said that—er—queer, queer thing to me tonight, I've always thought how perfectly lovely you were to Jane. I'm forever telling Ned about it.

Allen (*Growling*)—Yes; which has the natural tendency to make me love him with the passionate ardor of a brother!

Finlayson (*With crushing satire*)—You overwhelm me. It seems my fatal mission to break up families!

Allen (*Fidgeting with his shoes*)—Hang it, these shoes are about killing me! Wait a minute, you two, while I run upstairs and get my slippers. Shall I bring yours, Bee?

Beatrice—Yes, please. I'm surprised at *your* shoes hurting you! Would you like me to mention the fact to the Professor when he takes up the matter of my heels? (ALLEN *glares his indignation; she continues placidly.*) It would be a good idea to get these things off. (*Beginning to unlace her other shoe.*)

(ALLEN *goes upstairs.*)

Finlayson (*Hesitating, then approaching* BEATRICE *with his shoe-clerk manner*)—May I help you, Madame?

Beatrice—Please do.

Finlayson (*Unlacing her shoe*)—Please forget that "queer, queer thing" I said, will you, Beatrice?

Beatrice (*Self-consciously*)—*Of course,* Rodney! I shall never think of it again. I'll spend all my efforts in reconciling you and Jane. (*Sentimentally*) That will be my martyrdom!

Finlayson (*Amazed that she has taken him seriously, finds it difficult to explain*)—Well, you know it was the one time in my life, I think, that I adopted your system, and said the first thing that came into my head. Of course, if—er—that is——

Beatrice—I think my system is a very good one.

(*Virtuously*) It would be better if more people adopted it. There would be more truth in the world.

Finlayson—Don't you think that simple invention of the devil's, otherwise *lies,* would pop out of some people's mouths instead of truths?

Beatrice—Maybe! But not out of your mouth, Fin! I have always regarded you as the soul of honor. I'm sure I've always told Ned——

Finlayson—Spare my chaste soul and my blushes! Let's forget it! I can put it all very easily behind me if *you* will!

Beatrice—Shuh! Ned is coming. I'd perfectly hate to hurt his feelings!

(ALLEN *comes down bringing the slippers,* FINLAYSON *rises, and puts* BEATRICE'S *shoe beside the other on the couch.*)

Allen—Shall we leave on the bandage awhile?

Beatrice—Yes; just put on my one slipper. All right; thank you, Ned. Why, you're quite attentive!

Allen—Humph! Maybe my lessons are sinking in. (*To* FINLAYSON) Well, you ought to decide on some plan to confront Jane with when she returns to talk things over. How about it?

(TAD *is seen to steal softly past C. E. carefully carrying two pies, one of which he conceals behind the portière, the other he carries upstairs.*)

Finlayson—Seems to me, I've done about enough planning this evening. I'll wait and hear what Jane has to say. I never knew her to go off on an impulse.

Allen—Well you beat *me,* with your grammar and your impulses!

Finlayson—It's all a matter of how you decide to live your life. I thought ours was all decided. I thought I was living Jane's way. It was good enough for me when I got used to it, but it turns out that it wasn't what she wanted at all, so now I'm going to wait and hear what she has to say.

Allen—I wish she'd get a move on then!

Finlayson—Now that I have been shaken out of my groove I'm not going to be dropped back again. I don't believe that wise old guy who said once that "all novelty is but oblivion." I object to that "oblivion" stuff. I'm going to remain in the foreground of this affair.

Allen—Now you're talking!

Finlayson—Hang it, I don't know just what I do mean! But she's going to *see me* when she comes in! I'll be right here, "center stage"!

(*The telephone rings.* ALL *start.*)

Beatrice—That may be Jane!

Allen (*Answering*)—Yes? Hello!—Yes, yes, this is Allen speaking.—Why, certainly—I hate to have you take that trouble.—Can't I send them round?—Oh, very well, if you insist!—Good-by. (*Hangs up.*) Isabel Perry says she's coming round in a taxi to get her typewriter and other belongings this evening. Now, isn't that a darned shame?

Beatrice—Perhaps, as things are, it's just as well!

Allen—As things are, it's a damned shame, *I* say!

Beatrice (*Haughtily*)—Well, Ned, if you *will* be profane, I think I'll go upstairs.

Finlayson—And not wait for Jane?

Beatrice—Why? Do you wish me to? What can *I* do?

Finlayson—I'd be glad to have you stay.

Beatrice—Very well. But—I must see where Tad is and send him to bed.

Allen—Let me go.

Beatrice—I can go perfectly well, thank you. I must speak to Bong about breakfast. (*She rises,* ALLEN *assisting her, and helping her toward C. E.*) I'm all right, Ned; you needn't come with me.

Allen (*Coming back*)—Just as you say!

(BEATRICE *goes out C. E. to right. The two men stand in front of the mantel.* ALLEN *offers* FINLAYSON *a cigar which he accepts. They smoke, apparently forgetting their cares, as men do. During the ensuing dialogue* TAD *steals down the stairs, peeps in C. E., takes the pie from behind the portière, assures himself that the two men are paying no attention to him, and runs softly down L. into the* FINLAYSONS' *apartment.*)

Finlayson (*Puffing meditatively*)—It's a queer old world, Ned. I'm inclined to think that the crazy Dutch Professor is right, although *he* doesn't know it! He hasn't got brains enough!

Allen—If I were in your boots at the present moment I'd be scattering what few brains he has on the nearest pavement!

Finlayson—Oh, no you wouldn't! What good would that do? Only make things unpleasant for the passers-by. He's got hold of a few catch phrases that please the women, and he's making money out of them. You and I could have used, not only those phrases, but also the things they

stand for. "Change?" Yes, "nothing but change," he says, but that doesn't mean arbitrary change, it means voluntary. Freedom and change have been my watchwords; only, as I said earlier in the evening, I'm not spectacular enough; nobody pays any attention to me because I don't hire a hall and advertise that I'm from Boston!

Allen—That's the reason I believe in smashing things once in awhile. Just *plain smash!* It makes them notice you.

Finlayson—That's the quickest way, of course; only sometimes, in your haste, you smash the wrong person. My way isn't so "qvick, speedy," but it's pretty sure to win out in the end.

(TAD *steals in from L. and hides under the couch.*)

Allen—Well, I don't have time to reason out all this dope. I tell you when a man's chained to his office desk for ten hours a day he doesn't have much time for——

(BEATRICE *comes in hastily, limping.*)

Beatrice—Have you seen Tad?

Tad (*Under the couch*)—Yoo-whoo!—Tweet! Tweet! Yoo-whoo!

Beatrice—Dear me! I hear a little bird under the couch!

Tad (*Crawling out, and ecstatically jumping at his mother*)—Oh, mama, it's so nice when you're home!

Beatrice—Taddy! Careful—careful!

Allen—See here, son, no rough-house! Remember mama's foot!

Beatrice—Now run away upstairs, Tad, and go to bed. Mother doesn't have to come. Just take

off your bath-robe and slippers and jump into bed. Good-night, mother's boy.

(TAD *hugs his mother, and starts toward C. E.*)

Allen (*With pretended injury*)—Well I *like* this neglect! (TAD *rushes to him and jumps into his arms, giving him a bear-hug.*) Good-night, daddy. (*Seeing* FINLAYSON *watching him, he jumps into his arms next.*) Good-night, Uncle Rod. (*Kissing him on the right cheek*) And here's one for Aunt Jane. (*Kissing him on the left cheek*)

Finlayson—Thank you, Taddy. Good-night.

(TAD *runs toward C. E.*)

Beatrice—Oh—Tad! (*He turns.*) Don't forget to say your prayers.

Tad—I *did* say 'em—twice!

Beatrice—Twice?

Tad—Yes, once to Bong, and once to God. (*Whining*) I don't have to say 'em again, do I, mama? They know what I want.

Beatrice (*Choking*)—Very well, Taddy; twice is enough. Run along!

Tad (*At C. E.*)—I want a drink of water!

Beatrice—Bong will take you a drink of water.

Allen—Want daddy to bring it?

Tad (*In alarm*)—Oh, no, no! You wait for mama. You have to help her. Come up soon, mammy!

Allen (*Laughing*)—All right. Good-night, old man.

(TAD *goes reluctantly upstairs.*)

Beatrice (*Laughing*)—Tell Bong to carry up a glass of water to your son, Ned.

(ALLEN *goes out C. E. to right.*)

Finlayson—There's not much chance for stagnation while Tad is around.

Beatrice—I suppose I spoil him terribly—but what is one to do!

(*The doorbell rings. They look at each other questioningly.*)

Finlayson—I suppose I'd better answer that. (*He goes out C. E. to left.*)

(ALLEN *and* BONG *appear C. E. coming from the dining-room.* BONG *carries a glass of water.* ALLEN *motions for him to take it upstairs.* ALLEN *remains C. E.* FINLAYSON *is heard talking to someone at the front door.*)

Allen (*Calling*)—Come in! Come in!

Parker (*Outside*)—No thanks, I'd better not.

Allen—I insist. I want to talk to you.

Parker (*Enters with* FINLAYSON. *The three slowly come into the room.*)—I thought Mrs. Allen would need her purse which I was carrying for her in my pocket, so instead of phoning I brought it right around. (*He hands* ALLEN *a small handbag.*)

Allen—Beatrice, Mr. Parker has brought your purse.

Beatrice—Oh, how good of you, Mr. Parker! Why, I hadn't missed it! Do come in.

Allen (*As* PARKER *still hesitates*)—Yes, come in; there's something to talk about.

Finlayson—*Come in.* The majority rules!

Parker (*Stiffly*)—Very well, for a few minutes; although I can't see what good can be gained by talking. I hope your foot is feeling easier, Mrs. Allen.

Beatrice—Thank you, I hardly feel it at all now.

Allen—Sit down. I just want to tell you that you're away off on the wrong tack. Fact is, you know, there's nothing to it. You've got the best girl—and—(PARKER *looks indignant.*)—Hang it, Fin, this is your job! Talk to him.

Finlayson (*Shrugging his shoulders*)—When a man gets into Parker's state of mind mere words don't do much good. He *wants* to believe the worst.

Parker—I'll be glad to hear what you have to say; not that I think it will change my attitude. Not in the slightest degree.

Beatrice—You mustn't feel like that, Mr. Parker. We are all subject to change, and——

Allen—Oh, Lord! Better let Fin do the talking, Bee. (*They sit.*) He's an expert in that line.

Finlayson—I'm in the position of the unfortunate person who was introduced by the gushing hostess as the funny-man of his community. Nothing could be more conducive to a free flow of wit and wisdom!

Allen—It's never any trouble for you to air your views.

Beatrice—Oh, Ned! You're positively rude!

Finlayson—"And rudeness must be met with rudeness." Dry up, Ned! You gave me the chair. What I was going to say is this. Parker's in a state of mind when "seeing is believing," but he's seen the wrong things. Now, any minute Miss Perry may be here; and I propose that Mr. Parker just calmly sit in that big chair by the fire where he will remain unnoticed while we entertain Miss Perry in the studio. (*Indicating the left side of the room*) Thus he can——

Parker—Do you mean I am to eavesdrop? (*Excitedly.*)

Finlayson (*Calmly*)—Not at all, not at all! You can't help it if she doesn't notice you. Just at present you appear to have broken off diplomatic relations with Miss Perry, and as there will be several witnesses to her conversation there will be no secrecy. You have been rather poor at *seeing,* but you may *hear* something to your advantage. (*The door-bell rings.*) No doubt that is Miss Perry now.

Beatrice (*Excitedly*)—It may be Jane!

(ALLEN *goes to the front door.*)

Finlayson—It doesn't much matter which arrives first. Here, Parker, sit down here, will you? Resign yourself to the court of arbitration! (*He turns the chair with a high back facing the fire, and* PARKER *dejectedly does as he is told. The lights are subdued on that side of the room.*)

(ISABEL *comes in with* ALLEN *C. E. She looks doubtfully at* BEATRICE.)

Beatrice—Come in, Miss Perry. I do wish you wouldn't take away your things! It was all my horrid temper that caused most of the trouble. Couldn't you forget it now and make friends? I'm terribly sorry. I'm sure your mother thinks I'm a perfect cat!

Isabel (*Frankly*)—Of course, I'll forget it, Mrs. Allen. Naturally you believed what was told you.

Allen—It was the most idiotic nonsense I was ever mixed up in. (*Looking from his wife to* ISABEL) The idea of my thinking you—that is, of course—I mean to the right man you are—(*becoming hopelessly confused*)

Isabel (*Laughing*)—I know all you would say, Mr. Allen. No explanations are necessary—you have been too good a friend to me for that. (*She and* BEATRICE *laugh.*)

Finlayson—Then that settles it. Your typewriter, your easel—all the junk remains here, the same as usual, eh?

Isabel—You are all very kind to want me, but I think I'd better please my mother in this. I'll not be with her very much longer, you know. (*Beginning to pack up her things*)

Beatrice—Oh, indeed?

Isabel—She is very anxious to have me at home during the next few months.

Finlayson—And then what?

Isabel—I can take in work there, you see, just as well, and then—(*Consciously, turning to* ALLEN)—if plans work out as we thought earlier in the evening, you know I told you I would be married.

(PARKER *starts up, then subsides.*)

Allen—You haven't changed your mind, then?

Isabel—Well, this is a sort of clearing-up meeting, isn't it? I might as well be frank. I've changed my mind twice this evening!

Finlayson—It's the great privilege of your sex.

Isabel—An hour ago I was so angry with Syd that I never wanted to see him again. (*Again* PARKER *starts up, but controls himself.* BEATRICE *saunters, humming, in line between his chair and* ISABEL.) Half an hour ago I told mama I'd stay with her forever! Then these last few minutes I've thought how perfectly ridiculous and childish it is to allow a slight misunderstanding over *noth-*

ing at all to spoil our whole lives. We must be cured of such nonsense!

Allen (*Glancing at* BEATRICE)—Sensible girl!

Finlayson—Fine!

Allen—Have you that letter of recommendation with you that I gave you awhile ago?

Isabel (*Producing it*)—Yes.

Allen—Would you mind if I sent it to him myself?

Isabel—Oh, no, not at all! The pleasure is gone now in the birthday present.

Beatrice—Whose birthday?

Allen—Shuh! (*To* FINLAYSON) Give it to him. (*Motioning toward* PARKER)

Finlayson (*Taking the letter from* ALLEN)—Um-hm!

Beatrice—So you expect to be married this summer?

Isabel—Yes, if Sydney makes good in his new position.

(PARKER *springs up, and is confronted by* FINLAYSON. ISABEL *looks indignantly at* ALLEN *and the others, but is reassured by* ALLEN.)

Allen—Don't be angry! This is part of the cure.

Finlayson—Mr. Parker, earlier in the evening this "billet doux" was entrusted to a charming messenger to deliver to you, but a series of mishaps befell it. Now it has come into my hands, and before it causes any further trouble I think you would better take possession of it.

Parker (*Taking the letter*)—But this is addressed to Miss Perry.

Finlayson—Probably you will find that it has a double envelope.

Parker (*Opening the letter, finds that there are two envelopes. He reads the name on the inner one.*)—That means me, all right! (*Opening the letter, he reads, his expression changes, he looks at* ALLEN.) Carroll-Seymour! Mr. Allen, I have you to thank for this!

Allen (*Smiling at* ISABEL)—I had only a little to do with it.

Parker (*Awkwardly approaching him and* ISABEL)—I've been an awful fool tonight, Isabel.

Isabel—Many happy returns of tomorrow, Syd! Let's forget tonight!

Parker—You're a corker, Isabel. (*He stands awkwardly before her, then turns hastily to the others, and shakes hands all round.*) Is there anything I can do around here?

Isabel—Yes, help me to pack up these.

(SHE *and* PARKER *gather her things together.*)

Finlayson—You are determined to move, are you?

Isabel—Yes, I must.

(FINLAYSON *and* ALLEN *assist with the packing.* BEATRICE *sits on the couch.*)

Finlayson—I am going to miss my little secretary-art-student terribly.

Beatrice—Now, if it had been *you* she—er—— (*Catching herself up*) Taddy will miss you too, dreadfully!

Isabel—Yes, dear little Tad! I shall miss him. He must come to see me. He and I share loads of secrets.

(*The door-bell rings.* EVERYONE *looks at the other nervously.* ALLEN *answers.* FINLAYSON *plants himself in front of the fireplace.*)

Isabel—Hurry up, Syd! We must go.

Parker—Everything seems to be here, eh? Have I got 'em all?

Isabel—I think so. (*Her arms and* PARKER'S *are full.*)

(ALLEN *enters,* ALL *are expectant.* JANE *enters. She talks back into the hall.*)

Jane—Oh, do come in a moment, Professor, and help me explain our plans! They are all here. That makes it so much nicer! Come in—come in!

Professor S. (*Appearing C. E.*)—If you insist, Madame.

Jane—Won't you take off your coat?

(*The others, meantime, are bidding* ISABEL *and* PARKER *good-night.*)

Professor S. (*Shrugging*)—It iss not vorth vhile, dear ladee. I remain so leetle time.

Jane (*Gaily*)—Well, good people, it's all settled. (*To* ISABEL, *who is in a great hurry*) Oh, don't run away, Miss Perry! Why, I didn't expect to find you here, Mr. Parker!

Parker—It's a surprise to me also, Mrs. Finlayson. I am helping Miss Perry to move.

Jane (*Surprised*)—Well, do wait a moment and hear our plans for the big meeting.

(ALL *sit except* FINLAYSON. *After some indecision he comes forward and determinedly places a chair C. for the* PROFESSOR. *The latter thanks him effusively, and sits.* FINLAYSON *remains in front of the fireplace, smoking furiously.* ISABEL *and* PARKER *still hold their parcels.*) We are to make use of the same hall. On second thoughts we concluded it would be large enough, eh, Professor?

Professor S.—Qvite large enough, I t'ink.

Jane—Although we do want to plan this especially for men, there's no disguising the fact that it is hard to attract them along the lines of the Professor's chosen subject.

Parker (*Trying to be conversational*)—What is the subject to be?

Beatrice (*Falling again under the glamour of the* PROFESSOR)—Yes, couldn't you give them a little idea of what it is going to be?

(*The* PROFESSOR *looks enquiringly at* JANE.)

Jane—I wish you would.

Professor S.—It iss widout precedent dat I do diss—yet vat can I do, ven it iss for you, Madame? My idea for dees lecture, it iss necessaree dat I put all in vone, as it vere, so I begin mit a few t'oughts on der not'ingness off der potentiaree plasmogen. I ondertake to explain how useless iss dees in der eferyday life off dees period!

Parker—Very interesting, I'm sure!

Professor S.—Den—by natural conse*quence,* ve come to der pleonasteec tendencies off der Kosmos, making, as it vere, so mooch—how shall I say?—(you see, I haf not my notes)—so mooch disturbances between der mens and dee vomans.

Allen—Here's where I begin to catch on!

Professor S. (*Glad to see his interest*)—Yes, Mistair A*llen,* it iss dat so great cosmotheteec force which ve, only so few off us, like Madame Feenlayson and meinself, (*Adding as an afterthought*) and off course, Madame—er—(*Indicating* BEATRICE) dees little ladee here, who can anteecipate der years, and make off dees a new eera.

Jane—It's going to be *splendid,* combining so much in one lecture! Oh, how fortunate we are!

Beatrice—I'm crazy about it!

Jane—Then how will you sum up, eh?

Professor S.—Sum up? How you mean, Madame?

Jane—What will you finish with?

Professor S.—Oh, I see! Vy, my dear ladee, der sum total iss vone grand idea—ze t'ing for vich feefty years hence ve lif——

Jane (*Smiling*)—Yes, go on—you'd better explain to them further.

Professor S. (*Turning to* ALLEN)—I am sure you haf seen der need off dees change, Mistair Al*len;* eef not here in your so charming household, den in dose around you.

Allen (*Brusquely*)—Yes? To what do you refer?

Professor S. (*Solemnly*)—To der Trial Marriage, Mistair. It iss my most dearly cherished dream off der fut*ure.*

(*There is a subdued stir amongst all his listeners, except* JANE, *who appears to be enjoying herself hugely.*)

Isabel (*Hastily*)—Sydney! We really must be going!

Parker (*Moving suddenly, drops one armful of parcels*)—I'm with you.

Isabel—Oh, dear, now see what you've done! (*Going C. E.*) Well, good-night, once more. Come along, Syd! (*She goes out.*)

Professor S. (*Detaining* PARKER *a moment*)—I hope to see you and dee so charming ladee on der Monday efening—er—Mistair—I haf not your name.

Parker (*Abruptly*)—My name is Parker.

Thanks, I'm sorry, but I expect to be out of town about then. Good-night all! (*He goes out hastily.*)

All—Good-night!

Professor S. (*To* JANE)—I t'ink I also must now go. My vife, she haf asked me to stop by der pharmacee for some coughing syrup for dee babee.

Jane—Baby?

Beatrice—Baby!

(FINLAYSON *starts.*)

Allen—What's that?

Professor S.—Ah, my tiny leetle vone, dee babee, she haf a bad cold taken.

Beatrice—Why, I didn't know you were married.

Professor S. (*Holding up his hands*)—Oh, so mooch married, my dear ladee! I haf der five—er—(*Motioning as though his children were a stairway, touching the head of each above the other*)—how you say? *Steps!* One—two—three—four—five—der grand Americain cheeldren!

Finlayson (*Suddenly coming forward, a gleam in his eyes*)—Very interesting, I'm sure! And Madame Staticmuller, how is she?

Professor S.—Ah, dee good home-maker! She iss dere in der house. I t'ank you she iss vell, ve'y vell. Dat iss, as vell as vone can expect—of course, you onderstand—der cares off a familee!

Finlayson—Yes, I think we all see plainly! How does it happen, Professor, that you, who are apparently so happily situated, make it your life work to preach, "change, change, change"?

Professor S.—Ah—er—Mr. Feenlayson, is it not? Yes—er—mit der great idea, it iss enough dat it

iss born in my brain. I gif it forth, Mistair—it iss enough! I am exhaust! It iss to others I look to lif my idea, Mistair Feenlayson—to others I look to lif! (*Hastily*) Good-night, I must go! It haf been so great pleasure, I assure you, to meet all in dees happy, happy home!

(*With elaborate bows to* ALL *he goes out C. E., followed by* JANE. *The others sink down in various attitudes of surprise,* ALLEN *and* BEATRICE *looking at each other fixedly. Then* FINLAYSON *begins one of his paroxysms of silent laughter on the couch.*)

Jane (*In the hall*)—Good-night, Professor. It was awfully good of you to take so much trouble. (*There is a murmur from the* PROFESSOR.) Oh, yes, we'll all be there! Good-night.

(JANE *reenters. She stands in the doorway surveying them, then peers around to see what* FINLAYSON *is doing. He is speechless.* ALLEN *and* BEATRICE, *not seeing him, regard* JANE *with indignation.*)

Beatrice—Well—I'd like to know what you have to say for yourself, Jane Finlayson!

Jane (*Softly*)—April Fools'!

(FINLAYSON'S *laughter breaks out audibly. He leans back in the corner of the couch and laughs until he is weak.* JANE *seats herself L. in the big chair, and regards him with assumed wonder, then begins to laugh.* ALLEN *and* BEATRICE *fidget about the room indignantly.*)

Beatrice—Well! When you have *quite* finished, you two!

Allen—Next time I miss an Indoor Yacht Club meeting, for such damned nonsense, you'll know it!

Finlayson (*Gasping*)—That is my one regret, Ned! (*He struggles up, and approaches* JANE, *trying to assume a masterful air, but failing utterly.*) What do you mean, Madame? What do you mean, I say?

Jane (*With pretended meekness*)—I was trying to develop my sense of humor, Rod.

Finlayson—Well, you succeeded all right, old girl. You've got us all beat a mile!

Jane—Thank you. That's high praise from you! I am encouraged to continue. (*Looking about*) Has anyone seen my book? I left it here earlier in the evening. (*She searches for it.*)

Allen—Come along, Bee; I'll help you upstairs. (*They start, taking* BEATRICE'S *wraps.*) I move that we strike this fool night off the calendar. What do you say if we forget it?

Finlayson (*Joining them, with* JANE, *near C. E.*)—I'm willing! I began it, so I'll finish it. I'm sorry!

Beatrice—Why—I don't think *that,* Rod! I'm sure if Ned hadn't come in as cross as a bear——

Allen—Shuh! (*Stopping her mouth with a kiss, he hurries her off upstairs, she protesting.*)

Jane (*Gaily*)—Nobody began it. It was all just an inevitable part of the dear Professor's potentious pleonastic tendencies! In plain language, "change, change, change!" Good-night. (FINLAYSON *regards* JANE *awkwardly, not knowing what to say to her. She continues to search for her book.*) I wish I could find my book! I want to finish a chapter.

Finlayson—Maybe it slipped under the couch.

Jane (*Looking under the couch*)—Whatever in

the world! (*She draws out a brick and some sticks.*) Some of Taddy's tricks, I suppose. Oh, here's my book! (*Rising*)

Finlayson (*Solemnly*)—Oh, I forgot! I have been entrusted with a gift for you. Tad left you a kiss right here. (*Indicating*) You may take it now, if you like.

Jane (*Solemnly*)—Thank you! (*She kisses him carefully on the spot indicated. Then he catches her in his arms, and holds her close for a moment. Then* JANE, *with a contented sigh, draws away a little.*) Did you really care as much as that, Rod?

Finlayson—I cared a whole lot, Jane. Next time you must give me warning when your sense of humor is going to take a flight.

(*Loud laughter comes from the* ALLENS *upstairs.*)

Jane—Something seems to be funny. Will you put out the lights, Rod? (*Going toward their apartment L.*) Oh, I'm dead tired!

Finlayson (*Beginning to put out the lights*)—Yes.

Bong (*Appearing C. E. from the dining-room, glances in*)—I put out lights.

Finlayson—All right, Bong. Good-night.

(*He goes out L. The laughter from upstairs continues.* TAD'S *shrill voice is also heard.* BONG *pokes the fire. Then laughter comes from the* FINLAYSONS' *apartment.* BONG *turns from the fireplace in wonder. Down the stairs come the* ALLENS, TAD *capering after them.* ALLEN *is in his shirt-sleeves,* BEATRICE *in kimono and slippers, her hair down.* ALLEN *carries an apple-pie aloft, and his pajama suit, tied in knots, over his arm.*

BEATRICE *carries her nightgown, and several sticks and bricks. Sticks are protruding from the sleeves of the nightgown.*)

(*From L. come the* FINLAYSONS. RODNEY *carries his pie on his head, and in each hand a brick, to balance, while his pajama coat, with knotted sleeves, hangs over his shoulders like a cape. He also is in his shirt-sleeves.* JANE *is in her kimono, and wears her nightgown over her shoulders like a cape. She carries some books and sticks. When all see each other, they become quiet for* TAD'S *benefit, and march solemnly around in a circle, while* TAD, *in pajamas, and barefoot, capers wildly about, shouting.*)

Tad—April Fools'! April Fools'!

(BONG *regards them solemnly from the fireplace as the* CURTAIN *falls.*)

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